



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

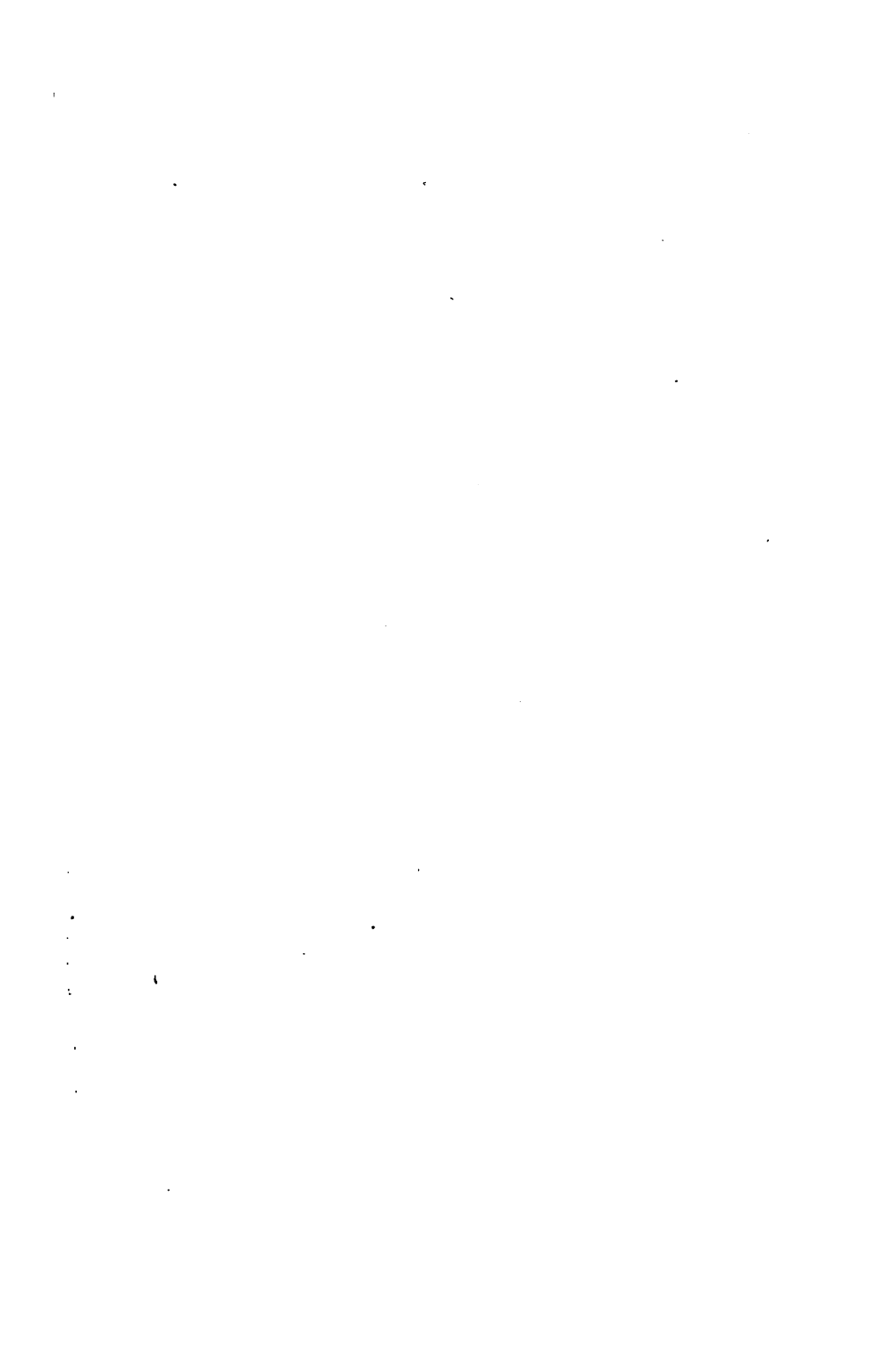
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600069492-





TOO LIGHTLY BROKEN.

VOL. I.



TOO LIGHTLY BROKEN.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



London:

SAMUEL TINSLEY, PUBLISHER,
10, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.

1873.

(All rights of translation and reproduction reserved.)

249. y. 610.



CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.		PAGE
LINA'S PROMISE	- - - - -	I
CHAPTER II.		
RETROSPECT	- - - - -	II
CHAPTER III.		
AT THE SEASIDE	- - - - -	23
CHAPTER IV.		
MUSIC HATH CHARMS	- - - - -	34
CHAPTER V.		
LONGINGS	- - - - -	49
CHAPTER VI.		
MISGIVINGS	- - - - -	67
CHAPTER VII.		
A CHANCE MEETING	- - - - -	78

CHAPTER VIII.		PAGE
TEMPTATION	- - - -	93
CHAPTER IX.		
HER FIRST APPEARANCE	- - - -	109
CHAPTER X.		
MADELINE VERNON	- - - -	122
CHAPTER XI.		
A VISITOR	- - - -	134
CHAPTER XII.		
A TROUBLED CONSCIENCE	- - - -	148
CHAPTER XIII.		
ONLY A DREAM	- - - -	160
CHAPTER XIV.		
LETTERS FROM HOME	- - - -	178
CHAPTER XV.		
TWO SISTERS	- - - -	200
CHAPTER XVI.		
A FANCIED RESEMBLANCE	- - - -	218
CHAPTER XVII.		
GERTRUDE BRINGS NEWS	- - - -	234
CHAPTER XVIII.		
FAITHFUL	- - - -	245

TOO LIGHTLY BROKEN.

CHAPTER I.

LINA'S PROMISE.

"And like music on the waters
Is thy sweet voice to me."

"AND why should I not try it as a profession?" said the girl petulantly, with a glance, half of enquiry, half of anger, at her companion.

"Because, Lina, as I have told you before, you are too young and inexperienced to go out into the world by yourself, and who is there now to look after you? You do not know what that life is which you are so anxious to try. You think it is all

happiness, that you would have nothing but praise and admiration, with no cares or troubles of any sort, but you little know the trials and temptations to which you would be subjected."

"But, Alan, what trials could there be if I succeeded, as I feel certain that I should?" she persisted; "you know papa often said I should make my fortune on the stage, and I am sure he wished it."

"If your father had lived he would have decided as he thought best himself; but I shall never believe, Lina, that he ever intended his daughter should sing in public; he knew too well—far better than I know—all that is entailed by the life of an actress, and I feel as certain, as if he were here to confirm what I say, that he would never allow you, his dearly loved child, to embrace a life such as you now long for. You fancy that because you are

almost certain of success no trials would come in your way, that your career would be one series of triumphs and ovations. It may be so, indeed I do not doubt it; but, Lina, those very temptations of which I speak would assuredly beset you on account of that success on which you reckon; temptations hard to withstand, clothed in such bright attractive colours, that until you have yielded to them you know not the dark pitfall of misery they conceal. You cannot understand me," he continued in an agitated voice, "but I speak only the simple truth when I tell you that I would rather follow you to the grave than leave England with the knowledge that you were about to become a public singer; and you know I never say what I do not mean."

The girl looked at him in wonder, his words were so grave and solemn, his man-

ner so unusual, that for the moment she was silent; they were walking through bright sunny meadows by the side of a rippling stream, and as they came to a shady spot Lina threw herself down on the bank, saying she was tired and should like to rest. The young man seated himself by her side, and laying his hand gently on her shoulder, said, "My Lina knows that all I wish is for her happiness: does she not believe that?"

She looked at him with a bright smile.

"Yes, Alan, I do; but it seems to me that in this case what *I* wish would be for my happiness, and then supposing I were to make a fortune for us both whilst you are away at sea! you would surely like that?"

"I should like nothing gained by such means, Lina; come to me as you are now, with all your fresh young charms for

lowry, but do not bring me fortune earned by the exhibition in public of talent such as yours, great and rare though it be. I do not pay you compliments, dear, you know it is not my way, but I must tell you that you are far too lovely to dream for one moment of undertaking the life you sigh for."

She blushed, and turned away her head at his words, but it was more from the expression of passionate love she read in his face than from the outspoken praise of her beauty, even though it was the first time she had ever received such from Alan Murray.

"I should have thought that might have been rather in my favour," she said after a pause.

"Good heavens, Lina!" exclaimed her companion, "you do not know what you are saying; beauty such as yours is

indeed a fatal gift if it be used to attract those who are but too ready to admire the last new face that catches their attention for the moment."

"I see you do not trust me," she said; and again there was the petulant ring as of a spoilt child in her clear voice.

"Nay, my darling, you wrong me, it is because I do trust you that I have spoken as I have done to-day. I trust in your own good sense and feeling, in your innate modesty, and also a little, I hope, in your affection for me. But I will not let you go from here"—he took both her hands in his, drawing her round until she faced him—"before you promise me faithfully, solemnly, that you will stay with my mother till I come home, and that you will give up, now and for ever, all thoughts of that wild plan which has taken such firm root in your little head. Promise

me, Lina, for I know then that I can trust you."

"I do promise you, dear Alan: how kind you always are to me, yet I have plagued you so much lately; but I will be very good and steady whilst you are away. Only ten months, or a year at the most, and you will be home again."

"That is all, but it seems a long, long time to me," he said rather sadly; "remember that I extract no other promise from you; you are free till I come back, free to——"

"But I do not want to be free, Alan," the girl interrupted, "I do not care for any one but you, and it is not right that you should consider yourself bound unless I do the same."

He smiled as he pushed back the clustering hair from her forehead.

"It is my pleasure to consider myself bound, dear, but I would not fetter you

until you can know your own heart better than you do now. When I come back I shall ask you if you think you can love me well enough to be my wife, but until then I wish you to be as free as if I could still look upon you as the little playfellow of old. You know that I shall never change; that whatever your decision may eventually be, I shall always remain your warmest, as I am your earliest, friend. But it is late; we must be going home, as my mother will not like me to be away from her on our last evening together. How lovely it is here, Lina!" he added, as they rose from their seats on the river bank, "I shall often think of this walk when I am far away on the treacherous sea. And you,—you will think of me sometimes too?"

"Very often, Alan, indeed; but I wish you were not going away. You

seem like my guardian angel; I think I always feel better when I am with you."

"Try to believe that I am still watching you, then," said the young man earnestly; "for I feel quite sure that if any harm comes to you, dear, I shall know it intuitively, wherever I may be. You will never be long absent from my thoughts; I would that I felt as sure of my place in yours."

The girl laid her hand affectionately on his arm.

"Do not speak so sadly, Alan. How can I ever forget you, when I think of all your great kindness to me? I should indeed be ungrateful if I ever ceased to remember my best and most thoughtful friend."

He turned his head away somewhat impatiently. It was not gratitude he wanted from this fair girl, yet he sometimes doubted whether his great love

for her would ever awaken any warmer feeling in her mind ; or whether it remained for some other to unlock the treasure which he so coveted—the first love of that pure guileless heart.

Early on the following morning Alan Murray took leave of his mother and Lina, and hastened back to Southampton, there to join the large merchant ship he commanded, which was now about to start on her voyage to Australia. He would willingly have stayed a little longer in the society of her whose presence had now grown so essential to his happiness, but his time was up, and he was obliged to tear himself away from Tenbrook,—his only comfort being in the knowledge that Lina had promised him not to leave his mother's protection during his absence, and that he would find her there on his return home.

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECT.

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder."

IN order to explain the girl's position in this little household, it must be stated that her father and old Mr. Murray had been firm friends since boyhood, and that the former on his death-bed had consigned his young daughter to the motherly care of his old friend's widow; for Mr. Murray had died a year or two previously.

Lina Heathcote's father was a musician; and in saying this we seem to condense, as it were, all that has to be said of one of the most amiable of men: kind, gentle,

meek, and inoffensive, he appeared to possess no other special characteristic save an intense devotion to his art, which in him amounted almost to a passion: speak to him of his profession and his eye would kindle, his speech, usually so quiet, would warm into real eloquence whilst he discussed the well-loved subject.

It was difficult to account for the strong friendship which existed between Mr. Heathcote and the keen shrewd lawyer; but it was always supposed, and I think not without reason, to have originated in some kindness shown by the young musician to James Murray, when chance threw them together in a London boarding house.

But however it commenced, this close intimacy subsisted between the two strangely assorted friends until a sudden illness carried off the old lawyer, about

four years before the period at which we begin our story.

I have said that music was Mr. Heathcote's profession; but it was not with him, as is too often the case, upon that solely that he depended as a means of subsistence for himself and his little daughter: he enjoyed a small private fortune, ample to supply his few necessities and to educate Lina as befitted her.

So that when, as old age came upon him and his health began to fail, his friends, the Murrays, persuaded him to leave his post in London, and settle near them at Tenbrook, he willingly acceded, devoting himself for the few remaining years of his life to the cultivation of his art and of his daughter's most beautiful voice. This last was to him, as it was to Lina herself, an inexhaustible source of pleasure; and many

were the hours spent each day at the piano—the old man teaching, the young girl learning, and profiting by his instructions to such an extent that, upon her father's death, when Lina had just attained her eighteenth year, she was considered by the most fastidious judges to be almost faultless in her style of singing, and in the management of her rich melodious voice.

She had never known her mother, who had died soon after her birth, but she had been early taught to reverence her memory, and had often wept over the simple words in which her father would tell her of his beautiful young wife,—she who had come to him and loved him when he had already reached the confines of middle life, and whose brief two years' stay with him he always alluded to as “that happy time.”

It was from her mother that Lina inherited her great beauty, which was perhaps even more that of form and expression than of actual feature, for her face varied with every passing emotion—the deep grey eyes, sometimes still and calm as a summer pool, would occasionally flash and sparkle till you could hardly believe them to be the same into whose quiet depths you had gazed before.

It was this variety of expression, this mobility of countenance, which gave the great charm to her fair face, and heightened the impression made by her tall, graceful figure.

Her father's death, the first real sorrow she had known in her young life, was a terrible grief to the loving daughter; and it required all the tender care, the devoted motherly affection she met with

from Mrs. Murray to rouse her from her first burst of despair when all was over.

This kind friend took the orphan girl home to her own house, where she spared no efforts to cheer and comfort her, till the acute feeling of desolation had in some degree passed away from her heart, and Lina felt that she still had something to live for, if only to repay Mrs. Murray for all she had done.

There is a buoyancy and elasticity in youth which lightens our burdens whilst we bear them, and helps us in time to throw them from us; so it was with Lina, that when we first see her, a year after her father's death, she had regained her health and spirits; and though she often spoke of the past, it was without that morbid feeling which had depressed her so painfully for the first few months.

Mrs. Murray saw this improvement in her young favourite with great delight, which she called upon her son to share with her when he returned from a voyage which he had undertaken immediately after Mr. Heathcote's death. To his mother's remarks upon Lina's improved spirits his sole reply was, "That is not the only difference I see, she is more lovely, if possible, than ever;" and turning away he left the house, not to return to it for many hours.

The mother read her son's secret, but wisely kept it to herself until such time as he should choose to confide in her. It pleased her well, for she loved the girl as her own daughter, whilst the possibility of Lina not returning Alan's affection never presented itself to her mind. Whom else was there for her to marry in their dull little town, where young men certainly did

not abound, and where Alan Murray's arrival from sea was always hailed with delight by the pretty girls of Tenbrook?


True, there was no one else; but for that very reason did the young sailor, with his sensitive nature—his keen sense of honour—shrink from the idea of binding Lina to himself by any promise which in after time, with a more extensive knowledge of the world, she might learn to regret having made: for this reason it was that he determined, cost him what it might, to leave her free and unshackled during the year of his absence from home, that she might test her affection for him, and discover whether indeed she could return his deep devoted love.

This love had not sprung up suddenly in Alan's heart; it had been growing steadily since the time when he had arrived from sea, one bleak winter's day, to find

the old house silent and desolate—his poor mother upstairs weeping her last beside the dead body of her husband, and no one to welcome Alan as he entered the quiet, darkened sitting-room.

Yes, there was some one: a little figure stole from a corner of the room, and as the young sailor bent his head upon his clasped hands, giving vent to his sorrow, two soft arms pressed tightly round his neck, whilst a low voice whispered, “Do not cry, dear Alan, we are all so sorry, and we all love you so much; I came in here with papa, because I thought you would be alone, and I wanted to try and comfort you.”

From the moment that Alan felt the pressure of those soft arms, and of the warm cheek which rested against his own, he felt that the affectionate friendship he had hitherto entertained for Lina was




ripening into something far deeper—something of which he did not at first understand the nature, but which not only stood the test of his next long absence from home, but made him so shy and constrained in manner when he met the young girl again, that she reproached him with having forgotten her, and not caring to see her as of old.

This reproach stung him so keenly that he could no longer doubt what was the real state of his feelings towards Lina; but he carefully concealed them from her, endeavouring as much as possible to treat her in the old familiar brotherly way. This went on until his last visit home, when Lina, who was then just nineteen, had been for about a year a permanent resident in his mother's house: then, a few days before leaving Tenbrook, he ventured to tell her of his great love,

and of his hope that she might one day learn to care for him as he had so long done for her.

Lina was surprised—she had not expected or thought of this, and was at a loss what to say; but in that moment of indecision Alan read her heart; he knew that the time had not yet come when she could give him the perfect trusting love of her young life. He told her this—told her that he was content to wait another year; that he would not take her answer until she knew more of the world, and could judge better what would prove to be the right course for her own happiness. It cost him something to do this, when he found that she was so ready to be guided by him to do all he wished—that she would have entered into an engagement with him at once had he urged her to do so.



CHAPTER III.

AT THE SEASIDE.

"I saw from the beach when the morning was shining
A bark o'er the waters move gloriously on."

THERE was one subject on which Alan and Lina had held several very animated discussions, on which she had shown herself strangely and unusually perverse, and which had caused the young man no small amount of uneasiness, until he had succeeded in extracting from her the promise that she would cease to entertain a plan of which he so highly disapproved.


Lina had more than once overheard her father say, in speaking of his daughter's

singing, that should she appear in public she was certain of success, with such a beautiful, well-cultivated voice; and she even knew that some of his old musical friends in London had strongly urged him to take this step; but whether he ever really entertained the idea she never knew. It took firm hold, however, in her own mind; and when she first broached the subject to Alan, expecting to meet with his cordial approbation, she was perfectly astonished at the vehemence with which he combatted her wishes: he who had hitherto shown himself so anxious to please her in everything, that her slightest wish had been to him as a command, now proved firm as a rock in his determination not to sanction Lina's proposed plan, or to help her in any way towards its fulfilment.

At first he merely entreated her to

abandon the idea, as one impracticable to her in her dependent position; but finding her so thoroughly bent upon it, he then told her of the difficulties she would meet with, bringing every argument he could think of to bear on his view of the matter, but in vain.

It was impossible to persuade Lina that the life she had pictured to herself could have any other side than the brilliant and attractive one it presented to her imagination. She remembered her childish days in London, the operas and concerts which she constantly attended with her father, to which was added a very vivid recollection of the kindness she had received from a lady who had for many years been a popular vocalist, and who had often excited Lina's admiring envy when she heard her in public, and noted the enthusiastic applause with which she was



greeted. Yet that lady had a sad history, if the child had but known it.

All these things Lina remembered; and when she thought of them in full contrast with the very quiet, somewhat monotonous life she was leading in the dull country town of Tenbrook, she could not help sighing for the change which would bring her so many delights. It was therefore a considerable disappointment to her to find that Alan would not sympathise with her aspirations—that even her final and, she thought, convincing pretext of making a fortune for them both had failed to have any effect upon him, but rather tended to increase his aversion to her proposal.

The conversation we have recorded was the last of several held on the same subject; and as Alan could not succeed in convincing Lina that he was right, all he

could do was to extract from her a promise, which he felt sure would be faithfully kept, that she would not leave his mother during his absence: by her side he knew the girl was safe, and Lina had never yet been known to break her word, even in the merest trifle.

It was early in October that Alan sailed; and at the end of the month was arranged that Mrs. Murray and Lina should take lodgings for a few weeks at a pretty, rather fashionable seaside place, some distance from their own town: this was looked forward to by them both as a very pleasant change, for undoubtedly Tenbrook was a quiet place to live in all the year round, as even Mrs. Murray confessed when she saw the gaily-dressed crowd that passed the window on the first night of their arrival at Waterside.

The two ladies enjoyed their visit very

thoroughly, and though they did not make many acquaintances, it was evident that Lina's beauty attracted great notice; indeed so marked was the admiration of one gentleman that it caused Mrs. Murray a good deal of annoyance. They could not stir out of doors without meeting him; if they sat down on the promenade he remained within view of them until they rose to go home, whilst his usual evening stroll appeared to bring him very frequently before their windows. If Lina noticed this she made no comment upon it to her companion, and as the gentleman never attempted to speak to them, Mrs. Murray could of course take no notice of his conduct, otherwise than by looking very dignified and stern as he passed them in the street.

Their visit was drawing to a close when Lina, who had been out by herself one

day, ran into the room almost breathless with excitement, exclaiming, "Oh Mrs. Murray, what do you think is going to happen? You must guess,—I shall not tell you!"

"I am sure I cannot guess, my dear," said the old lady, who had been roused from her afternoon nap by Lina's abrupt entrance; "perhaps that wonderfully high tide you told me of is going to sweep away these houses—they are rather near the sea. Shall we go home to-morrow instead of next week?"

"Go home! no indeed, not until after next Thursday, when this delightful thing is going to happen, which you have not yet guessed. It is something to which I have never been all the years I have lived in Tenbrook, but which I shall love so much, and so will you, I know."

"Tell me then, Lina, for I am fairly puzzled."

"A grand evening concert at the Assembly Rooms," said the girl, in a tone as though she announced something of the utmost importance, "given by some of the best *artistes* in London, who are making a tour through the country."

"But we cannot go to the concert, my dear," said Mrs. Murray rather mildly, well knowing she should be contradicted.

"Why not? we do not leave here till Friday, and it takes place the evening before."

"That is not what I meant; but, Lina, we have no gentleman with us, and could not go alone,—besides you know that I never go into society or to any places of amusement at home."

"Because there are none to go to," laughed the girl saucily; "I should like

to see the excitement at Tenbrook if a concert such as this were advertised ! Old Mr. Sowerby would preach upon the depravity of human nature in the shape of worldly amusements for a whole month afterwards. Do not look so shocked, dear Mrs. Murray ; you know it is quite true. But about having no gentleman with us, that does not signify at all ; we can take good places, and go quite early, without the slightest difficulty. You will not refuse me this great, great treat,—it is so long since I have heard any real music, and who knows when we may have another opportunity ? ”

“ But, Lina, neither you nor I have any evening dresses in which to appear before these fine people ; and you are rather particular about such things.”

“ You shall wear the pretty white China shawl which Alan brought you — what

more can you want, you vain old thing?" and she fondly stroked the smooth grey hair which lay plainly banded beneath the widow's cap she had never left off wearing.

"And you, Lina?"

"I shall find something that will do, for I need not be very smart as I am still in mourning; ah! if poor papa had only been here to go with us," she added with a sigh.

"As you have smoothed away all my objections so skilfully, child," said Mrs. Murray presently, "I suppose you would like me to come with you now and get the tickets."

"O yes do, please, if you are not tired. I heard it said that there was a great demand for them already."

"But how did you pick up so much information about this concert?"

"The shopman at Wood's showed me

a paper; whilst I was reading it a gentleman came in, asked if I would let him see it, and then made some enquiries from the man."

"Was it the same——?" Mrs. Murray began, but checked herself before she had finished her sentence.

"It was the gentleman who passes here so often in the evenings," said Lina briefly, and turned to busy herself with some flowers on the table.

The old lady felt very much annoyed, as she saw clearly that this man had taken the opportunity of addressing Lina when he found her alone; but she had too much confidence in her to fear his having done more than merely make some trivial remark respecting the concert programme; still she was not sorry to think that there only remained another week of their stay at Waterside.

CHAPTER IV.

MUSIC HATH CHARMS.

"Souls here, like planets in Heaven,
By Harmony's laws alone are kept moving."

LINA was in an intense state of excitement on the day on which the concert was to take place,—singing about the house, and dancing from one room to the other in the exuberance of her spirits, till at last Mrs. Murray persuaded her to sit down quietly with a book, lest she should tire herself out before the evening. The two ladies adjourned to the Rooms in such very good time as to be quite amongst the earliest arrivals, but Mrs. Murray, who felt a little

nervous on this her first appearance in public for so many years, was glad that they should be seated in their places before the bulk of the people came in, and they derived much amusement from the extravagant costumes of many of the fashionable audience.

Lina's excitement had somewhat subsided, or perhaps she was keeping it under control, as her cheeks were flushed and her eyes shone brightly, but she did not say much, and Mrs. Murray felt rather surprised to see her so quiet after the unusual gaiety of her manner all the afternoon. She looked very lovely in her simple white dress, her bright chestnut hair coiled round her small classically-shaped head, which bore no ornament save its own shining tresses. Mrs. Murray thought how much Alan would like to see her as she was to-night, and

turning to express to Lina her wish that he were with them, she suddenly perceived the gentleman whose conduct had annoyed her so much seated a few benches from them, intently gazing at her young companion. She hoped that Lina would not notice him, and attracted her attention to something in the opposite direction.

But when the music had commenced she had no occasion to fear Lina's noticing anything but that which took place on the orchestra ; the girl sat absorbed in the sweet strains she heard, literally drinking in every note, as though with them she imbibed fresh life into her soul. She leant forward with hands clasped on her knee, her face upturned to the singers, in utter unconsciousness of the presence of any but those on whose tones she hung with such rapt, intense delight.

The music was good, the performers

admirable, and the *prima donna*, whose compass of voice resembled Lina's own, happened to sing several songs with which she was familiar. To describe the delight with which she listened to these would be impossible,—but another feeling also mingled with her enjoyment.

Why could not she too sing at concerts, as this woman was doing? It did her no harm: why should she, Lina, be tainted, when another remained unscathed,—that other, too, young and attractive looking as well? She knew that this lady was obtaining an immense sum for her services, as she had heard it stated by the man from whom they took the tickets; and she saw by the applause which greeted her appearance on every successive occasion that she was a great favourite with the audience here as elsewhere; for Lina was well acquainted with the names of the

popular singers, though this was the first opportunity she had enjoyed of hearing any for many years past.

At the last there was a song which had always been an especial favourite with Lina, one which she held almost sacred as having been the last taught her by her father, and which she had a fancy for singing only to herself, and in the still twilight hours. When the first notes fell on her ear to-night she gave a little start, as if she felt it were no time or place for that song; but soon she listened as if spellbound, whilst the sweet singer poured out her whole soul in the beautiful and touching melody which the young girl loved so well.

The song ceased, a tumultuous burst of applause greeted its close, and the smiling *prima donna* withdrew amidst the admiration of the whole audience; but Lina

never moved from her position till Mrs. Murray touched her, and then she saw with dismay that the deep grey eyes were filled with tears.

“It is nothing, dear Mrs. Murray,” she said in reply to that lady’s look of surprise, “only it has all been so very, very beautiful; I think this has been the happiest evening of my life. That last glorious song! it must be so that the angels sing, I think,” she added in a whisper, as if to herself.

“My dear child, this excitement has been too much for you, I fear,” said the other lady, rather alarmed, and gathering up her cloak ready to start; “you look quite scared.”

“Do I? it is only that I am rather hot,” and she touched her burning cheeks. “But do you not think it must be delightful to spend one’s life singing in that way


—to feel that you are giving such intense pleasure to others as well as yourself, and to have the constant excitement of an evening like this, for instance, with a crowded audience hanging on every note you sing? Oh, how I wish I might do the same!”

“Nonsense, child; it is very pleasant for us to listen to such singing, but it cannot be so nice for those who have to exert themselves night after night, whether they feel well or ill, and to be subjected to all the caprices of the public taste; besides, what is to become of that poor woman when she gets old and loses her voice, or if any accident should deprive her of it now? All is not gold which glitters, Lina, as I dare say she has found to her cost long ere this. But the crowd is lessening now, I think we might venture to go down,—but mind you keep quite close to me on the stairs.”

“Why, do you think I might run away from you?” asked Lina, smiling, as she followed her down the broad staircase.

She found the hall still filled with people waiting for their different carriages, and Mrs. Murray was again attacked with her old feeling of nervousness on finding herself in a crowd without the protection of a gentleman; but Lina drew her into a quiet corner, where she persuaded her to remain until the stream of people had somewhat subsided.

This took a longer time than they expected, as it had turned out a very wet evening, so that those who had intended returning home on foot were now obliged to wait and take their chance of a stray vehicle; and Mrs. Murray began to fear that the driver whom they had engaged would become impatient if they did not make their appearance. Accordingly they



moved a little nearer to the door, and were rather anxiously awaiting their turn to get away, when a young man who had been leaning against one of the pillars of the entrance-hall watching them intently, though himself unseen, came forward, and raising his hat, said respectfully, "Can I be of any assistance in calling your carriage? I shall be most happy if you will allow me to be of service to you."

He addressed the elder lady, but his eyes were fixed on Lina as he spoke, and she blushed as she caught his expression of fervent admiration.

Mrs. Murray started as she heard his voice, and turning round, saw to her annoyance the same face which had haunted them during their stay at Waterside. She felt much vexed, though the stranger immediately averted his gaze from Lina and appeared intent only upon assisting her friend.

“Thank you, sir,” replied Mrs. Murray with old-fashioned courtesy, “but I should not wish to trouble you; I think we can manage very well now; our driver must be in waiting.”

“But it will save you trouble perhaps if you will allow me to call your carriage; it is not very pleasant for ladies to be alone in leaving these crowded rooms.”

“Our carriage,” said Lina, smiling, “is a fly from the hotel; but I am sure we shall be very much obliged if you will call it for us; the poor man must be tired of waiting so long in the rain.”

The gentleman bowed, and without a word passed out into the street, leaving Mrs. Murray looking rather scandalized at Lina’s audacity.

“How could you do so, my dear,” she said, “when we do not know anything about him!”

“Never mind, Mrs. Murray,” laughed the girl, “he seemed anxious to help us, and it was a pity to disappoint him; we shall not see him again after to-night, so our having no acquaintance with him cannot be of any consequence.”

“But then he will get so wet out there in the rain.”

“Perhaps that may do him good, for he looks such a thorough dandy, as if he had never in his life been accustomed to being out in a shower. But here he comes.”

The “unknown,” as Lina afterwards called him, informed Mrs. Murray that their fly would be at the door in a very few minutes,—but it was by Lina’s side that he stationed himself, and to her that he said, in a voice which she alone was intended to hear, “You are very fond of music, are you not? I could see it in your face to-night.”

She looked somewhat confused, for this was a tacit confession that he had been watching her during the concert ; but she answered simply, "Yes, I love it dearly ; there is nothing to be compared to it, I think."

"And you sing yourself, I know?" he questioned.

"A little," said the girl, smiling.

"I know you do ; I have heard you, and to hear such a voice is not easily to forget it. That last song is a favourite of mine too, and until lately I fancied no one but Salvi could do justice to it ; but since I came here I have thought differently, and I now know that even she can be surpassed."

Lina looked at the speaker for an instant in amazement, then the bright colour rushed quickly over her face, the heavy lids drooped over the beautiful

eyes, and she turned away her head unable to meet his gaze. She recollected at once having sung that song at her favourite twilight hour only a few nights previously, whilst Mrs. Murray had been busy in another room ; and she knew that this stranger, whose words sank so deeply into her mind, had been an unseen listener as she poured forth her favourite melody.

Something in his look and tone told her plainly the strong interest he took in her, and it was well that her confusion was hidden at this moment by the announcement that their fly was in readiness ; their unknown friend gravely offered his arm to Mrs. Murray, Lina following silently.

The brief converse had not been unnoticed by Mrs. Murray ; it was therefore in a rather constrained and formal manner that, after the two ladies had seated themselves, she thanked the stranger for his

services. Lina too murmured some words of acknowledgment, and she long remembered the look he gave her as, lifting his hat, he said, "I need no thanks. Indeed, I only wish it had been in my power to render you any further assistance."

"I do not half like that man," observed the elder lady, as they drove off.

"Do you not? He was very kind to us, I am sure."

"Yes, kind enough, no doubt," returned the other, drily; "but I did not like his expression, and, considering we were quite strangers, I think he seemed to be talking very confidentially to you, Lina, just now."

"He was only asking me whether I was fond of music, and if I sang myself," she answered; but she felt glad that the darkness concealed the hot blush which rose to her cheek as she recalled his tones.

“Then he need not have made so much mystery about it; but at any rate, much as I have enjoyed this delightful concert, I am not sorry we leave here to-morrow. I am getting a little tired of all the bustle and gaiety here, to tell the truth. Think how quiet Tenbrook will seem to us after this place!”

“Yes, indeed, quiet enough,” said Lina with a sigh, of which she repented the next minute, lest her kind old friend should deem her ungrateful for the pleasant change they had enjoyed together.

CHAPTER V.

LONGINGS.

"Life would be too smooth if it had no rubs in it."

THE next two months, which were spent by Lina quietly at home with Mrs. Murray, were certainly very dull ones. It happened to be an unusually trying winter, gloomy and damp; and whether this had any effect in depressing the girl's spirits, or whether she felt Ten brook, with its lazy, humdrum, every-day life too severe a contrast from the lively scene at Waterside, and longed for something more congenial, certain it is that she drooped and pined through the weary months of December and January.

She tried hard at first to settle down with interest to the old familiar ways, to her work, the care of her poultry, the reading aloud to her old friend in the evenings, but she was obliged at last to own to herself, almost with dismay, that she had ceased to care for these things, that her former occupations no longer presented any attractions to her. It must be herself, then, who was changed, since everything else remained the same; and if so, wherein lay the change? Alas, she knew well that the evening spent at the Waterside concert had brought back with renewed force all the old longing for the life which Alan had forbidden,—all that desire for fame, popularity, applause (perhaps, too, for admiration: who can say?) which had been growing in her mind ever since her father's first casual remark respect-

ing her chances of success should she appear in public.

She had tried resolutely to stifle her inclinations in obedience to Alan's wishes, to believe that he was right in all he had said ; and to such an extent had she succeeded that, had it not been for the visit to the sea, or rather the concert with which that visit had terminated, she might have gradually relinquished her idea, and in time, under Alan's tuition, have even come to look upon it with as great detestation as he did himself. But that concert had been the turning-point ; the excitement of the evening, her intense admiration of the music and of the performers, had all combined to fire her imagination, and to recall the old longing with tenfold vigour. She fancied herself in the place of Mdlle. Salvi, coming forward to sing to that crowd of upturned, eager faces, then retiring amidst

the applause and admiration of all who heard her. What life could be more delightful, more full of pleasure, than this? What a series of triumphs was this young *prima donna's* as she journeyed through the country!

And then Lina was almost ashamed to confess to herself with how much weight some flattering words she had heard that evening had become engrafted in her memory; words which assured her that she too could command the same success, did she but choose to exercise her powers. For what purpose had this rare gift been sent to her, if she must for ever bury her talent in a stupid and unappreciative little town? Would it not be only right, she argued, to make the most of it, to use it as a means for her advancement in life—for Lina was ambitious at times in her ideas; and then, after a year or two, how

pleasant it would be, she thought, to repay Mrs. Murray for all her kindness by bringing a handsome fortune to Alan on her marriage with him! Then she remembered what he had said on that same subject, but she trusted to her own powers of persuasion to overrule his objections, if she succeeded in her first object.

To such an extent did these yearnings after what seemed to her well-nigh an enchanted life fill Lina's mind after her return to Tenbrook, that, as was said before, all former occupations appeared to lose their interest for her, with the exception of her music, and to that indeed she now applied herself with redoubled vigour.

She would spend whole mornings at the piano, practising new and difficult songs, the names of which she often culled from the newspapers as being those most popular

with the favourite singers of the day; nothing but this method of passing her time seemed now to give her any pleasure, and it was with sincere regret that Mrs. Murray noticed the gradual change which had come over the bright young creature who but a few weeks ago had been so gay and happy. In her fond mother's heart she half hoped that Lina was fretting over Alan's absence, but the indifference with which she one day prepared to write her usual letter to him dispelled this notion, whilst it rather shocked her sense of what was due to her son's steadfast, unwavering affection.

"I do not think you are well, Lina," she said, after watching the girl for some time as she sat idly dreaming over the half-written letter, her pen drooping from her listless fingers, "or else you find it unusually difficult to write to Alan

to-day; suppose you put it off till to-morrow."

Lina started guiltily as she heard her own thoughts thus put into words; she did find it very difficult just now to write to him, when her whole mind was full of ideas and aspirations of which he so distinctly disapproved, and which she never could impart to him, though longing to pour forth her wishes to some one who could understand and sympathize with her.

"I am quite well indeed, Mrs. Murray," she answered; "but you know there is not very much to tell Alan this time; we have written to him so recently."

"I suppose there is as much as usual," returned his mother, with a touch of asperity in her voice, "and we always write by every mail. You never found any difficulty in sending him a long letter

when he was out on his last voyage, and no one knows better than you, Lina, how much he values your letters."

"But I have nothing to tell him now; everything here is so very quiet; one day so like another that it is not easy to think of any incidents to write about. He will not care to hear that the new curate reads through his nose, or that the old clerk gave out the wrong hymn on Sunday, or that you have given Bessie notice to leave because——"


"Lina, Lina, I do not like to hear you talk in that way. When Alan was at home had you ever any difficulty in finding something to say to him?"

"No, certainly not; but that was a different thing."

"How different?" asked the elder lady.

"Can you not write as if you were speaking to him still? Tell him all you do,—

trivial though it may seem to you,—tell him the names of your new songs, and of the books you read to me in the evenings. I am sure he has often told you how much all the little details of every-day home life interest him when he is far away from us, and how they serve to bring the picture of his old home more clearly before his mind. Remember that for weeks and months during his long voyage he is completely cut off from all communication with us,—does not even know if we are alive and well; then think of the delight with which he must receive our letters, the link that binds him to those he loves at home. Lina, do not be cold to my boy; you can hardly yet know all he thinks of you, or how much his heart is set upon winning you when he comes back. If you write him a careless, indifferent letter to-day, merely because you do not feel in the



humour for writing, it will be a keen disappointment to him when he opens it, weeks hence, expecting to find kindness and affection."

"I should be indeed sorry to disappoint Alan, so, as I really do not feel inclined for writing to-day, I will take your advice and finish my letter to-morrow morning."

"That is right; now come and talk to me a little, for I have hardly seen you to-day. There, settle down in your old place at my feet, and let us have a chat together. Something has come between us lately, I fear, dear; you never come to your old friend with all your little troubles as you used to do before we went away this autumn."

"But what troubles can I have when you are always so very, very kind to me?" and she stole her hand into that of the old lady, clasping it affectionately.

“Nay, I cannot tell what they are, but I know that something is amiss with my child. You think, I dare say, that because I have said nothing I have not noticed the change there has been in you lately; but I have been watching you closely, and it has grieved me to see you so listless and unlike your former self. You take no interest now in anything but your music, and I doubt if it be right to spend so many hours over that every day, to the exclusion of other things.”

“But surely it must be right to practise regularly; I could not keep up my singing unless I did, and then I am not neglecting any real duties, for I never seem to have any.”

“I think we can always find some duties close at hand if we look well for them,” said Mrs. Murray, gently. “I should have been very glad to have had that

knitting pattern copied the other dear."

"Oh Mrs. Murray, I am so sorry forgot it; let me go and do it now," she half rose from her stool, but the lady would not let her go.

"No, sit still, I am not in any hurry for it, and can well wait another day; I only mentioned it to enforce what I was saying. But, Lina, I have been thinking a good deal about you lately and I have come to the conclusion that you would be the better for a thorough change."

"A change!" echoed the girl; "but it is only two months since we came home from Waterside, and you never leave Tenbrook in the winter."

"By complete change, dear child, I mean both of place and companionship; that is what I think you need at present."

You have always complained of finding our little town dull,—perhaps it is so for young people; of course for myself the recollection of many happy years of married life spent here is sufficient to endear it to me, but with you it is different. Then you do not care for the young girls here, and have never made friends amongst them. When Alan is at home you do not want companions, as you are always together, but now he is away for so long I can quite understand that you must wish for some one younger and more cheerful to talk to than an old woman like me. It is perfectly natural; I only wish I had thought of it a month ago, before those round cheeks had lost so much of their pretty colour, but I am going to propose a remedy to be carried out at once, and you will see what a nice dose I shall prescribe.”

“But indeed,” interrupted Lina, “I am quite happy with you, though I have been very selfish lately, and so made you perhaps fancy I was not.”

“No, dear, I do not think you selfish; you are merely longing to take your part in the pleasures and amusements natural to your age, which you used formerly to enjoy in your visits to London with your poor father, but which we have no means of giving you here. Youth is the time for enjoyment, and as long as it is only entered into in a moderate degree, so as not to make you dissatisfied with your own lot in life, I see no reason why you should not have it. I have often thought of that concert, and wished it were in my power to give you such another treat. Now my plan is this: you remember Mr. Hammond?”

“Papa’s old friend, with whom we

stayed in London? Yes, that I do, and his good, kind wife, who used to make so much of me, taking me about everywhere with her."

"Well, dear, when Mr. Hammond came here at the time of your great sorrow he spoke to me very kindly about you, and of the interest his wife had always taken in you. He then said he hoped that at any time I could spare you I would let you pay them a visit in London, where they would be delighted to see you, as it would be a perfect charity to his wife, having no children of her own, to secure a young lady visitor for a few weeks. Now, I am sure the good man meant every word of this, and you know they did ask you last spring, when you did not feel in spirits to accept the invitation. I propose, therefore that you write to Mrs. Hammond and ask if she

could receive you now for a short visit. This is the twentieth of January; you might be ready by the first week in February if that would suit her."

"But I could not leave you alone, Mrs. Murray," said Lina, though hardly able to conceal her joy at this proposition.

"I have thought of that too; and when you write to Mrs. Hammond, I intend writing to my niece, Mary Wood, to invite her to come and stay with me. She will like the change; besides I shall be very pleased to see her again. So you need have no scruples on the score of leaving me, though I will not say that I shall not miss my bonny child while she is away;" and she caressed the bright head which rested against her knee.

"How very kind you are to me!" the girl said, whilst the tears glistened in her eyes. "You have been thinking and

planning all this for me while I have been only selfishly longing for what I thought would never come in my way; for I will be honest now, and confess that you were right. It is like Cinderella and the fairy godmother! But, Mrs. Murray, do you know what Mrs. Hammond used to be?" as a sudden thought struck her.

"Yes, she was a singer; but what then?"

"I only fancied you did not approve of the life—that is all."

"Nor do I exactly approve of it, for many reasons; but I know that I am quite safe in trusting you with such an old and valued friend of your father's. I have often heard him speak of her self-denying liberality, bestowing all her hardly-earned profits upon her mother and sisters when she first began her career, refusing even to marry until she had placed her own

family in a position of independence entirely through her exertions. With such women, Lina, I believe that all means are blessed, though they may not be quite such as we should choose ourselves. But now that we have settled this weighty matter you had better ring for lights, as it must be nearly tea-time, I think."

CHAPTER VI.

MISGIVINGS.

“We are born to do benefits.”

LITTLE sleep did Lina Heathcote get that night. Her mind was already revelling in the pleasure to be enjoyed during the coming visit to London which the forethought and kindness of her old friend was to procure for her, in exchange for that dull monotony which of late had so painfully oppressed her in her present mode of life.

Mrs. Hammond, to whom her visit was to be paid, was a very old friend of her father's; had been, too, one of his early pupils, and he had watched over her open-

ing career as a public singer with an interest that was almost equalled by his admiration of the many fine qualities which distinguished her in private life; her devotion to her widowed mother and young sisters had been exemplary, though known only to her few intimate friends, but amongst these Mr. Heathcote was one of the most valued. He knew better, perhaps, than any one the hard struggle with poverty which went on in that little household before the young singer had succeeded in making her way to the front ranks amongst the *artistes* of the day. That once accomplished her success was secured; but it required all the kind encouragement of her friends, all the warm sympathy of her family, to induce her to persist in a career which at first seemed so arduous and uncertain.

Want of confidence in her own powers,

combined with an over-sensitiveness respecting her personal appearance, which, unfortunately, was not attractive, had been the two great drawbacks against which she had to struggle; when these were once finally, and with great effort, overcome her popularity was established; nor did it once falter until the day when she bade adieu to the stage, with powers still unabated, but with a handsome fortune, half of which she insisted upon settling on her own family. She had then been some years married to a medical man, who had become attached to her in early life, who had waited patiently until he had secured a comfortable position for himself, and then, somewhat impatiently, until Louise Duval would consent to become his wife; but this she would not do until she had seen her old mother restored to the same comfort and ease she had

enjoyed prior to the death of her husband.

A happier couple than the doctor and his wife it would hardly be possible to find; yet they had their trial, if not a very severe one. No children had blessed their marriage, and for the first few years this had been a cause of great regret to them both; but Mrs. Hammond contented herself with expending the warm motherly feeling which exists in every true woman's heart upon those young members of her own profession with whom she came in contact.

After she had herself retired from public life she continued to keep up an intimate connection with all the most celebrated musical people of the day, of whom her pleasant, hospitable house was often the *rendezvous*, whilst invitations to Mrs. Hammond's musical evenings were eagerly

sought for by all lovers of the art. Every young *débutante* was certain to find in her a sympathizing, encouraging, and judicious friend. Remembering well her own early days, with their numerous trials and difficulties, she was ever a ready listener to the tales of disappointments, temptations, or sorrows brought to her by her young friends.

More than once, too, her watchful care, her unswerving rectitude of purpose, had saved a fair but thoughtless girl from that downward path which Mrs. Hammond had seen trodden but too often by those who had been companions of her own in former days.

Her love for the profession she had quitted was so great that, notwithstanding its difficulties, she was ever amongst the foremost to encourage those who, still debating upon the advisability of attempt-

ing it, would come to her for advice, always provided she foresaw for them a fair measure of success.

But she was truthful almost to bluntness, and it was impossible to obtain even the shadow of praise from her unless she felt it to be justly due; it was only cruel kindness, she argued, to give any encouragement which must afterwards be damped by certain failure. At the same time she was always willing to give the aspirant for musical or vocal fame an opportunity of being heard at one of her evenings; and many a career in life had been settled by the approbation, or the reverse, of Mrs. Hammond's critical friends.

It was with this lady, and with these surroundings, that the next few weeks of Lina's life were to be spent; it is not, therefore, surprising that in her present

frame of mind her delight should have been excessive at the prospect opened out to her by the very warm invitation contained in the letter she received in immediate reply to her own.

She was to go at once, as soon as Mrs. Murray could spare her; and, as that lady's niece was to be with her in the first week of February, it was settled that Lina should start the day after her arrival at Tenbrook. It was not until she was busy preparing for her journey that the sudden recollection of her promise to Alan, that she would not leave his mother whilst he was absent, darted swiftly across her mind; and she sank down on a chair with a feeling almost of dismay, that for the first time in her life she had broken her word, and that, too, when Alan had trusted her so entirely.

She must not go; she must give up her

visit, write and tell Mrs. Hammond that unforeseen circumstances prevented her, at the last moment, from coming to town, and then make some excuse to Mrs. Murray for remaining at home.

But no, it was too late to do this now, especially when she had herself asked for the invitation; and then she reflected that the leaving home was not her own doing, but that Alan's mother had herself proposed that she should go, had even considered the change as necessary for her health, therefore it would surely be wrong for her not to avail herself of this opportunity, which she felt might not occur again. She would not be away for more than a few weeks, and she would explain everything in her next letter to Alan, which, by the way, must be sent off in a day or two if she wished him

to receive it before he sailed home again from Melbourne.

So she tried to quiet her conscience, and if she did not quite succeed she at least had the satisfaction of feeling that the leaving Mrs. Murray had really not been of her own seeking, and that Alan was always too well pleased to give her any gratification which came in her way to have wished to deny her this pleasure, had he been at home himself. Mrs. Murray was sorry to part with her young friend when the time came, but she had, fortunately, that very morning received a long letter from her son, sent by a homeward-bound vessel, and this served to occupy her thoughts and prevent them from dwelling too much upon Lina's prospective absence.

Alan wrote in good spirits, said they were having a very pleasant as well as

prosperous voyage, enlivened by the presence of several passengers; amongst these he mentioned a young married lady, who had been recommended by her physicians to try the effect of a long sea voyage for her health, and who, with her sister and maid, had been entrusted to his especial care before the ship sailed from England. The lady had already derived great benefit from the voyage, having almost entirely lost her cough, and she expressed herself as so much pleased with the good ship "Goldfinder" that she intended making the return voyage in her also.

"Her husband," wrote Alan in his letter to Lina, "found himself unable to accompany her, owing to a press of business engagements at home, in which, to tell the truth, I had not much faith,

when I saw what a thorough swell he looked; of course he came to see her off, but I thought his manner rather heartless when he left her, whilst she, poor thing! could hardly bear the parting. At any rate, I know I could never let *my* young wife start without me on a long, perilous voyage—undertaken, too, most likely, as the sole means of saving her life.”

Lina had not time to read her long letter carefully through, so placed it in her pocket to enjoy it more thoroughly at her leisure in the railway.

“Be sure you think of Alan on Monday, dear—his twenty-eighth birthday, you know,” were his mother’s last words to Lina as the train slowly steamed off; the girl nodded a smiling assent, and the bright young face faded away from the old lady’s sight.

CHAPTER VII.

A CHANCE MEETING.

"'Tis not the action, but the intention that is good or bad."

IT was a long, tedious journey from Tenbrook up to London, and it was already dusk some time before the suburbs of the great metropolis were reached. Lina had two travelling companions—both elderly ladies—who did not vouchsafe to take the slightest notice of her, and who divided their time pretty equally between eating and sleeping, but she was too happily occupied with her own thoughts and an amusing book to feel at all hurt by this neglect.

Finding it too dark to read with any comfort she had put down her book, and when the train stopped at a small station, a few miles out of London, she was idly watching the different passengers whose figures loomed through the gathering fog, when the door of the carriage was opened, and a voice she immediately recognised was heard speaking to the guard, as that individual obsequiously touched his hat to a personage evidently of some importance at the little station. The lamp shone full upon his face as he stopped for an instant to give some directions before entering the train, and Lina saw before her the gentleman whose politeness had given so much offence to Mrs. Murray on the night of that memorable concert. She shrank back into the corner of the carriage as the gentleman took the seat

opposite to her, hoping that in this dim light she should escape recognition.

Why she thus wished to avoid him she did not quite know, but it was certainly her first impulse, and, acting upon this, she turned her head aside, resolutely gazing out of the window, though by this time it was scarcely possible to distinguish any objects except the rapidly increasing number of lights as they neared London. She heard the rustling of paper as her opposite neighbour drew the *Times* from his pocket, and attempted to read; then, with a half-impatient exclamation it was thrust back again. She still kept her head turned aside, but she soon felt, with that strange intuitive perception, that the stranger was watching her intently; and it seemed as if his gaze had exercised a sort of fascination over her, for after struggling

in vain to keep her attention fixed in another direction, she slowly turned her head to meet, as she had expected, the same look of unmistakable admiration she had so often seen at Waterside. The colour mounted to her cheek as she returned his bow.

“I was afraid,” he said, “that Miss Heathcote did not, or would not recognise me. I assure you I was beginning to despair; the darkness of the outside country seemed so marvellously attractive.”

Lina smiled. “I was not aware that you knew my name!”

“Do you think I could rest until I had ascertained it?” he asked, in a low voice. “When you took such a precipitate flight from Waterside the day after the concert, I could hardly believe you were really leaving as you drove past me on the

way to the station. A visit to your deserted lodgings, however, soon proved too plainly that the fair nightingale had flown; it was cruel to leave so soon."

"We did not leave sooner than we had intended; we had been there a month," said Lina, simply, "and I do not know that I should have cared to stay longer unless I could have heard that concert over again."

"You will hear plenty of concerts now if you are going to make any stay in London; the season has hardly commenced, but I trust you do not intend to limit your visit here to one month? It would be hard indeed to deprive the fashionable world of so fair an ornament."

"I do not suppose I shall have much to do with the fashionable world; at least, not with that portion of it to

which you belong," she answered, remembering the respectful guard at the station.

"And how do you know to what portion I do belong?" looking very much amused, as Lina coloured and seemed confused by this most natural question. "At any rate, Miss Heathcote, I may be allowed to express the hope that we may meet again during your stay in town. I shall look out for you at every musical gathering of the season, and it will be strange indeed if I miss seeing you."

"Nothing more probable I should fancy," laughed the girl, "in such a crowd as that which attends all good concerts in London."

"You seem determined to believe that our paths shall not cross again," he said, in rather a vexed tone.

"Oh no, I am not; but you see I am going to stay with some musical people, and I know they are not considered fashionable by those who visit a great deal in good society."

"Then you think I am in good society?" he asked again, amused by her simplicity, as he was already charmed by her beauty.

"Yes, I think so," she answered gravely; "but is not this London?"

"It has been London for a long time past; but this is the station to which we are coming now, and very sorry I am that it is so. Allow me to get your umbrella down for you;" and he lifted it from above her head, secretly hoping to discover her address in town from the card which he had seen hanging to the handle, but to his disappointment it only bore her name.

"I am not sorry to arrive, for mine has been a long journey," she observed.

"Ah, true; I forgot that you must be feeling tired. It was selfish in me to wish we had not reached our destination yet. I trust you have not a long drive before you?" he asked, hoping by this question to discover what he wanted to know.

"To the Regent's Park, which is some distance I fancy. There is my friend waiting for me on the platform. I see," said Lina, as she caught sight of Mrs. Hammond.

"Then I am afraid I can be of no further assistance to you," said her companion, as he handed her out of the carriage; "but in spite of all you have said, I prophecy and hope that we shall meet again before very long. Good-bye, Miss Heathcote."

So saying he withdrew from her side as Mrs. Hammond came up, accompanied by a man servant. The latter was left in charge of the luggage, whilst Lina, after receiving a very warm greeting from her friend, accompanied her to the neat little brougham that was in waiting for them.

"I am so very pleased to see you," said Mrs. Hammond, as soon as they were seated. "I thought it nice and friendly of you to write to me in that way, for I do like people to take me at my word."

"I was half afraid you might think it impertinent after I had sent the letter."

"Not at all, dear; you know I had begged you to tell me whenever you could come to us, and when you know me better you will find that I never

give an invitation of that kind unless I really mean it. As it is we are only too delighted to have a young girl with us to take about to different places; it brightens up the house a little when there are only two old people in it, like myself and Mr. Hammond."

"I should hardly think that was ever needed," said Lina, as she looked in the bright, good-humoured face of her companion.

"Well, I cannot say we are ever really dull; but still a little young life is very pleasant about the house sometimes; and you would always be welcome for your father's sake as well as for your own. You are not like him in face; I suppose you must resemble your mother."

"Yes, I believe I am very like her; papa always said so, but I have never seen any one else who remembers her.

Am I much changed since you saw me last, Mrs. Hammond? ”

“ Yes, you are changed ; but I can hardly tell you in what respect, though I see a difference. Four years ago you were at what people call an awkward age—you had not ceased growing, and were very thin ; in fact, I used to think you looked rather delicate, but I see no signs of it now. By-the-bye, I hope you keep up your singing ? You promised to have a good voice ; and your father wrote me word that you were improving rapidly.”

“ I sing a great deal, and there is nothing I love so much,” Lina answered in her eager way.

“ That is right,” said Mrs. Hammond approvingly ; “ to-morrow you must let me hear you, and I will give you plenty of musical treats whilst you are with

me. And now tell me, how did you leave your good friends the Murrays?"

"Mrs. Murray is very well; she has her niece staying with her at present, or I could not have left her; she has been such a kind true friend to me—never for one moment letting me feel as if I were under any obligation to her, but just treating me as if I were really her own daughter. Is it not kind of her, Mrs. Hammond?"

"Very," answered that lady rather drily; "but her son, where is he now?"

"Oh, Alan is at sea you know, he only comes home for a few weeks at a time;" but something in the tone of Mrs. Hammond's inquiry had brought the colour to Lina's face, and she did not answer as indifferently as she would like to have done.

"Has he been home lately?" pur-

sued the other lady; "and is he as kind a friend as his mother, or merely a rough unpolished sailor?"

"No, indeed, he is most gentle and refined,—there is nothing in the least degree unpolished about him; he is always kind to me, but then I have known him nearly all my life. He was at home in the autumn, but he will not be back again until August at the earliest—a long time to be away from his mother. Alan was the youngest, and the only one who lived to grow up, so it is rather a trial to Mrs. Murray that he should have become a sailor."

"I dare say he will marry and settle in England before long: young men often tire of the sea when they have had a few years' experience of it." Mrs. Hammond stole a side glance at her

companion; for she had noticed her rising colour, and though nothing more was said between them on the subject of Alan Murray, she felt convinced there was sufficient ground for weaving a very pleasant little romance, in which the young sailor and Lina Heathcote figured conspicuously,—for what could be more natural than that the orphan girl should repay the kindness she had received from the mother by bestowing her hand upon the son? It was indeed unlikely that he should have been thrown into companionship with this beautiful girl without falling in love with her; and so fully did Mrs. Hammond succeed in persuading herself that there existed at least a tacit engagement between the two, that she needed only the evidence of the long letter which Lina despatched to Melbourne a day

or two after her arrival to confirm her in this belief.

Lina was kindly received by her host, a handsome dignified looking man between fifty and sixty, with whom she had always been a favourite in her childish days.

The Hammonds' house, in the Regent's Park, was certainly not in a fashionable neighbourhood; but it suited the doctor, as his practice lay principally in that direction; and his wife declared she did not care where they lived so that her friends would come to see her; and as these had never been known to desert her, it is probable she was satisfied with her bright cheerful home.

CHAPTER VIII.

TEMPTATION.

“Then sing—sing—Music was given
To brighten the gay, and kindle the loving.”

LINA was allowed to rest quietly the first day after her arrival, though protesting she felt no fatigue from her journey; but as the weather was dismal outside, and the house charmingly warm and cozy inside, it was no hardship to sit quietly over the fire chatting with her hostess.

“You must sing to me this evening, Lina,” said that lady as they rose to dress for dinner, “I saw plenty of music in your box; bring it all down, we shall want to

hear every song in the course of time you may be sure."

It was not without a little trepidation that Lina prepared to sing before such a very severe critic as she knew Mrs. Hammond to be, and she carefully selected a song in which she felt herself to be thoroughly at home.

"Are you nervous?" asked Mrs. Hammond as the girl seated herself at the piano.

"I never felt so before, but I confess I am rather afraid of singing to you, it seems so very formidable."

"Then I will have compassion on you and go to the other end of the room; I had better take Mr. Hammond with me though, as he is politely waiting to turn over the pages for you."

"Oh yes, please do, I am accustomed to turning over for myself, and I shall feel happier if you both go away."

She had chosen a song rather simple in execution, but which required an amount of expression and true artistic feeling which it rarely received, but to which full justice was done by Lina's most exquisite voice and refined style of singing; all her timidity had vanished as she struck the first note, and she was soon lost to everything but her own delight in the music, so much so that she started when she heard Mrs. Hammond's voice at her side as she finished her song.

That lady, after exchanging signs of wondering admiration with her husband, had stolen noiselessly across the room, and upon Lina closing her music she quietly re-opened it, and, as sole comment upon what she had heard, said, "Sing it through again, dear, please."

Lina obeyed, but when she came the second time to the end she felt rather

surprised that still no remark was made upon her singing, but that Mrs. Hammond, placing another song of a totally different character before her, merely said, "Now let me hear this."

She sang it, if possible, even more brilliantly than the other, as her voice became accustomed to the unusual size of the room, which was one built on purpose for music, and she grew excited as she always did when engaged in her favourite occupation.

"Child, your voice is glorious, perfectly splendid," exclaimed Mrs. Hammond at last, "and your style too; where have you studied?"

"Only with papa," answered Lina, though not without pleasure at the praise bestowed on her voice by one so well calculated to form an opinion.

"True, you could not have had a better

master, but you must have perfected yourself very much even since then I suspect. That last song was absolutely faultless, and I well know how difficult it is to sing correctly. Now, John, you do not say a word," turning to her husband who had come up to the piano.

"You have not given me time, my dear, but I was just going to express my admiration of Miss Heathcote's charming voice. It is indeed a rare treat to hear one like it."

"Hear one like it! why it is almost impossible," exclaimed his enthusiastic wife, "with such a voice as that she would be a perfect treasure on the stage; it is really a shame that it should not be known to the public. Have you ever thought of that, Lina; or do you not think you should like it?"

"I am sure I should like it, it is what

I have always longed for," and her eyes sparkled with suppressed excitement as she looked eagerly at her friend, "but do you really think I am fitted for it, Mrs. Hammond?"

"Yes, I do indeed think so, your voice is beautiful, it is also fresh and young, not worn threadbare as so many are now-a-days; you have a good style, and you have nothing to unlearn, which is also a great thing, no tricks of manner by which so many young singers spoil their performances and their voices. If you would really like it I see no reason why you should not try whilst you are with me; in fact I think it is the best thing you can do."

"But, Louise," interrupted her husband, laying his hand on her arm, "you should not be so impetuous about everything; you have only just heard Miss

Heathcote sing two songs, most admirably rendered I admit, yet you want to settle on the spot that she is to become a public performer, and this very season too. You must at least allow her time to consider the subject well before coming to any decision, and also to communicate with her friends who might not approve of such a plan. You forget that everyone is not such a devoted adherent of the stage as you are yourself."

"But I would not go on the stage; I should only sing at concerts," said Lina.

"You could do as you liked about that, dear, but of course John is quite right in saying we must consult your friends."

"I have no friends but yourself and Mrs. Murray; if you approve and I should like it so *very* much myself, is not that sufficient?" with an appealing glance at Mr. Hammond.

He shook his head. "I hardly think you would be justified in taking such a step without first ascertaining Mrs. Murray's wishes; she is your natural guardian now you are living in her house——"

"But Lina is staying in ours now," interrupted his wife; "whilst she is our guest she may surely do as we think right. I will tell you what you shall do," she continued as a sudden thought struck her, "there is to be a private concert for the benefit of a charity this day fortnight, at the house of a friend of mine; the programme is arranged, but one new name can easily be inserted, and it will cause rather a sensation. You shall make your first appearance there, and Mrs. Murray cannot object to that as it is only at a private house."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Lina, clapping her hands, "you do not see any harm in that, Mr. Hammond, do you?"

“No,” he replied, smiling, “I am only afraid of this impulsive wife of mine leading you on to do what you might afterwards regret, but I think the private concert is a very good idea. Now as I have some writing to do I will leave you two ladies to discuss your plans together.”

“John is always so cautious,” remarked Mrs. Hammond as the door closed, “though in his heart I believe he has as much respect for the musical profession as I have; yet he vexes me sometimes by throwing cold water upon my plans. Now I look upon it almost as a duty that a girl who has such a voice as yours should let it be heard and known, especially when she seems to have a decided taste for it as you have.”

“Oh! Mrs. Hammond, if you only knew how I have longed to sing since I heard Mdlle. Salvi; the wish had been growing

before then, but since that night I have hardly been able to think of anything else."

And sitting down by her friend she opened her whole heart to her, finding, as may be imagined, a ready sympathizer in all her aspirations and wishes. She told of the way in which the idea had first originated from overhearing her father's speech ; how it had dwelt in her memory till she had become imbued with the firm belief that the life she sighed for was all that was romantic and delightful, and finally of the concert at Waterside, when she had listened with feelings of rapture to the celebrated soprano who had sung the pieces with which she herself was so familiar.

Not a word did she say, however, of her conversations with Alan, or of his extreme dislike to her idea of embracing

the musical profession: if she remembered this at all it was soon stifled by the encouragement of her friend, and the high praises bestowed upon her singing.

She spoke indeed of the pleasure it would be to gain some money on her own account, to "get a little fortune," as she said, and Mrs. Hammond smiled to herself as, coupling this with her former suspicions, she determined to do all in her power to help her young friend towards her permanent settlement in life. It was not likely that Alan Murray was very well off as yet, and it would be doubtless agreeable to them both if Lina could bring him a handsome dowry, gained by her own exertions.

She said nothing of all this to the girl herself, but that night she spoke openly to her husband of her suspicions, and by dint of a great deal of feminine diplomacy

and persuasion she almost succeeded in bringing him round to her own view of the subject, viz., that it would only be acting a kind, friendly part towards their young guest if they were to further her evident inclination, thus perhaps hastening her marriage, which otherwise might not take place for years. At any rate nothing should be settled until after the private concert, when Lina would have her first experience of singing before a large audience, and should the experiment not prove as agreeable as she anticipated, or her courage fail her at the last, she could change her mind before any permanent arrangements were made.

She had mentioned this concert to Mrs. Murray, who had fully approved of it, adding that she had entire confidence in Lina's kind hostess that anything she pro-

posed was sure to be right, as she must naturally know better what was proper and fitting for a young girl than Mrs. Murray herself, who had passed nearly all her life in a quiet, old fashioned, country town, and had known very little of London even in her youthful days.

With this permission Lina was quite satisfied, whilst Mrs. Hammond was so pleased that she chose to consider that from henceforth her young friend was entirely under her protection so long as she remained under her roof, and that whatever plans they liked to make together might be carried out without further appeal to Mrs. Murray.

Although the season had not yet really commenced, London was beginning to fill very rapidly, and Mrs. Hammond found no difficulty in providing amuse-

ment of every description for her guest, who entered with delight into all that came in her way, and the fortnight that was to elapse before the concert passed by rapidly.

Lina began to feel somewhat nervous as the evening drew near, for, though fully conscious of her own powers, it would not only be the first time on which she had ever sung before so many people, but she knew that the other *artistes*, several of whom were professionals, were all distinguished in their different ways and known to the public, whilst she was a perfect stranger, introduced only under the auspices of Mrs. Hammond. True, that fact alone would bespeak her attention, if not commendation, for the once famous contralto was still a great favourite whenever she appeared, which was only in cases like the present, where her doing

so could be of service in a charitable object.

The concert on this occasion was originated by her for the benefit of those who had suffered severely from a recent fire at the opera house to which Mrs. Hammond herself had formerly belonged, and she had enlisted many of her musical friends in this good cause. All the tickets had been sold, and the concert was expected to be a success in every way. It was held at the house of a lady who had shown great kindness to Mrs. Hammond in former days, who being extremely wealthy and passionately fond of music devoted much of her time to its enjoyment, collecting about her a little coterie of the best known *artistes* of the day.

This lady had already heard Lina sing, as had also most of those who were to perform on the night in question, and all


had expressed their admiration of the new addition to their ranks; in fact, it had become pretty widely whispered about that Mrs. Hammond's beautiful young protégée was to achieve wonders.

CHAPTER IX.

HER FIRST APPEARANCE.

"She walks in queen-like grace."

AS usual with Lina when very much excited, all her nervousness had disappeared when it had actually come to the moment for her to ascend the platform, and Mrs. Hammond, who had until now been a little anxious as to the result of her experiment, felt considerably relieved when she saw her young friend walk quietly to her place, without the least embarrassment, but with a modest ladylike manner, which was infinitely attractive.



Mrs. Hammond had placed herself where she could watch the effect of Lina's appearance on the audience, which, though numbering only some two hundred or so, contained some very severe critics amongst its ranks, and she knew that not a few had been drawn there from curiosity to hear the new singer, whose praises she had sounded. She saw that all were struck by Lina's extreme beauty, her graceful, unstudied attitude, and the charming simplicity of her dress and manner. There was but little applause when she first came on, but as it was a private concert this was not remarkable.

Her voice trembled slightly as she sang the first few notes, gathered strength as she proceeded, and finally astonished even those who had heard her before by the burst of beautiful warbling melody with which her song concluded; her fresh

young voice, so true and pure, went ringing through the lofty room as if rejoicing in, and testing its own powers. Lina's heart beat fast as the last prolonged note died softly away, and the applause, hitherto somewhat cold, now broke forth unrestrainedly. She even fancied she heard a cry of "Bravo! encore!" as she hurried away to be met at the stage door by her delighted and exultant friend.

"You must go back, child," said Mrs. Hammond; "you must sing it again—they are still clapping."

"Oh no, Mrs. Hammond, not again; no one else has sung a second time."

"Never mind, then set them a good example," and she half pushed her forward as the acting-manager came up to beg Miss Heathcote would kindly favour the audience with an encore.

So Lina complied, and a second time

her performance was greeted with the same applause as before. She retired to the room where her friends, with the rest of the singers, were collected, only to be received with renewed congratulations and compliments on her success.

“And now I think you cannot doubt that I am right, Lina,” exclaimed Mrs. Hammond, as, during the interval which followed, one after another of her friends came up to express the pleasure and gratification they had derived from Miss Heathcote’s singing, to which was added the hope that, though the first, it might not be the last time they enjoyed so great a treat.

Lina drank in all this admiration and praise with but too ready an ear; flushed and excited with her triumph, pleased with having taken this first step towards the achievement of her long cherished

wishes, she laughed and chatted with those around her in the highest spirits, looking even more fair and lovely than she did in her more pensive moods.

So, at least, thought the gentleman who, entering unobserved into the crowded room, paused an instant at the door to watch the animated countenance of the young singer as she leant back in her chair, listening to the compliments of her companions. He waited till her attention was disengaged, then seizing his opportunity he came up quietly behind her chair, and addressed her before she had a chance of seeing him.

“ You will allow me to add my congratulations to those of your other friends, Miss Heathcote,” he said, in his low, rich voice.

She started violently as he spoke, and, turning her head to answer him, she again

met that deep, passionate gaze, which from the first she had never been able to encounter without confusion. Her eyes sunk before his as she said, "You startled me so; I did not know you were here."

"Then you did not see me in the concert-room?" he asked.

"I saw no one distinctly, the whole mass of people seemed to swim together, and I could not distinguish any one. I suppose this was because I am not accustomed to facing an audience."

"And yet no one could detect the slightest trace of nervousness in your manner."

"No, I was not nervous when I had once commenced singing; but I was excited, and I think that has very much the same effect."

"Whatever the cause the effect was perfect," he said. "I was not wrong when

I said I had heard a voice that equalled Salvi's: it is the universal opinion to-night — I have heard the comparison made continually, — and by those, too, who are far better qualified to judge than myself. Do you know that I felt convinced I should hear you to-night, though I never once heard your name mentioned in connection with the concert? ”

“How could that be?” Lina inquired, incredulously.

“I had been asked to take tickets for this concert, but declined, intending to go out of town to-day. Then I heard a rumour that a young lady, whose voice was said to rival our best singers, but who had only sung in private life, was to lend her aid to this charitable performance. I also heard that this fair siren was a friend and guest of Mrs. Hammond's.” He

paused. Lina looked up at him quickly, as he had expected.

“ Well,” she asked ; “ and what of that ? ”

“ Did you not tell me, Miss Heathcote, though very chary with your information, that you were on your way to the Regent’s Park, when we parted at the station that day ? Now we happen to possess a very excellent directory in London at present, by the aid of which I was enabled to discover that Mr. Hammond is residing in the Regent’s Park. Thereupon I put two and two together, and after mature calculation arrived at the conclusion that the young lady of whom I had heard was identical with Miss Heathcote. After that you need scarcely doubt that my mind was made up about the concert.”

“ But I thought you were going out of town to-day,” Lina said, maliciously.

“So I was, upon important business too, I assure you ; but that had to be postponed until to-morrow.”

“I am afraid you cannot expect your business to be very successful if you are in the habit of putting it off merely for your own pleasure in that manner.”

“It was something more than mere pleasure which drew me here this evening,” he answered, in a meaning tone ; “had I been disappointed in my expectations I should have left the concert at the end of the first part ; I could then have been just in time to catch the mail for the north and so have saved a day. As it is I am more than repaid for the sacrifice.”

He watched the effect of his words in the expressive face of his listener, then finding that she made no reply and would not raise her eyes from the bouquet she was holding, he continued : “I had to ask

Mr. Hammond's permission to come up here, for I knew that none but friends of the performers were admitted into this sanctum."

"Do you know Mr. Hammond, then?" Lina asked in surprise.

"Slightly; that is, I knew him some years ago; but I renewed my acquaintance with him to-night, and begged to be allowed to come up here to speak to his guest whom I had the pleasure of knowing."

"You said a little more than the truth then, I think, considering that up to the present moment I have never even heard your name," and she laughed at the absurdity of this fact.

"Have you not? I had forgotten that. To me it seems as if we were quite old friends, as indeed I hope we may be some day. Do you remember telling me it was

not likely we should meet in London, and yet you have not been up a fortnight before I have found out that you are staying with an acquaintance of my own."

"Still we have not met in the fashionable world of which you spoke."

"The fashionable world has hardly begun to move about yet; but I have no doubt we shall meet there by-and-bye," he answered, evasively; for he did not like to admit that the society in which he moved was of a very different rank from that in which Lina Heathcote would be likely to appear, though he acknowledged that with her grace and beauty she would adorn any station of life.

Mr. Hammond came up to them at this moment, and, accosting the "unknown," told him that the concert was about to recommence, and that they had better take their seats at once; noticing the

animated conversation which had been taking place between the two, he politely added, that if Captain Charteris liked to call upon them he should be happy to see any friend of Miss Heathcote's at his house.

That gentleman thanked him warmly, expressing his intention of speedily availing himself of this permission; and with a few last words to Lina he withdrew in company with Mr. Hammond.

The second part of the concert passed off equally well; all the performers gained their fair share of applause; but it was universally admitted that Miss Heathcote had borne off the palm, and that it would indeed be a thousand pities if such a splendid voice as hers were not to be heard by an appreciative and admiring public.

"I shall call upon you to-morrow, Mrs.

CHAPTER X.

MADELINE VERNON.

"'Tis but a name."

IN the first flush of triumph, the first taste of that delicious draught which seems as inexhaustible as it is, in truth, ephemeral, the applause of the public, Lina's decision was made. Her appearance at the private concert had been a decided success; her name was already on the lips of half the musical world in London, sometimes spoken with praise and admiration, sometimes with bitter jealousy, as some unfortunate singer felt too surely that her reign was over, and

that the voice of the fickle multitude would decide in favour of the new comer.

Her friends were urgent upon her to follow her own evident inclinations and their advice, and to try for a time, at all events, the vocation for which she seemed so eminently fitted. Even Mr. Hammond withdrew his objections, admitting that the present was too good an opportunity to be lost of submitting to the public so rare and beautiful a treasure as Miss Heathcote's voice. His wife, no doubt, had a great share in bringing him round to this view; for that good lady was so delighted with Lina's performance on the night in question, as well as with her own diplomacy in bringing her forward on that occasion, that she never rested until she had obtained from the girl her confession that after this one trial she was more than ever of the opinion that there was nothing

1

she should like so well as to become a public singer, for this season at all events.

The manager too, Mr. Colvile, called early on the day succeeding the concert, to add his persuasions, if such were necessary, in inducing Miss Heathcote to join his company of vocalists for the ensuing season. It needed, however, but few words from this polite and urbane little man, for Mrs. Hammond had already been closeted the whole morning with her young friend, and the result of their conversation was that Lina had resolved to enter into a four months' engagement with Mr. Colvile, subject to such terms as her hostess, well experienced in such matters, should arrange for her.

It was settled that she should sing only at concerts, her objection to attempting the stage being so great that Mrs. Hammond did not try to persuade her. She

was also to sing in London, and nowhere else ; that being a stipulation of her own. The terms upon which she was engaged were so liberal as to astonish even herself, but Mrs. Hammond assured her that the manager was too thankful to have secured the new star for his company to grudge what seemed to Lina quite a large fortune ; but she thanked her friend, well knowing that to her skilful management she was in reality indebted for the munificence of the terms.

“ There is another point to settle,” said Mrs. Hammond, that afternoon, when the last of her friends, who had called to discuss the brilliant success of the previous evening, had at length departed, “ and that is your name. What shall you choose ? ”

“ I had not thought of that ; but may I not keep my own ? ”

“Of course, if you wish it ; but I should strongly advise you not to do so. You will find many disadvantages in being known and spoken about as Miss Heathcote, which would not affect you at all if you had one name for the public and another for private life. Why not take a foreign name?—it always tells better in England.”

“No; that I certainly shall not do,” answered Lina decidedly. “If I sing under another name it will be for my own convenience; but I shall never try to deceive the public into imagining I am a foreigner, when I am but an unknown English girl. I hate deceptions of that kind, and everyone sees through them in the end, as well.”

“Just as you please, dear,” said good-humoured Mrs. Hammond; “but I cannot say that I felt at all deceitful when I

sang as Louise Duval, although I was only plain Louisa Dawson all the time. Still, if you have any scruple about it, choose a pretty English name."

"Forgive my rudeness, Mrs. Hammond. I had quite forgotten that you were ever known as Mdlle. Duval, or, indeed, I should not have said what I did. But I think I will take my mother's maiden name; it will seem less like losing one's own identity than if I take a strange one."

"And what was that?"

"Madeline Vernon," said the girl, softly. "She was always called Lina, so they christened me by her pet name instead of the longer one."

"That will do excellently; it is very pretty, and is a name that will take well, I think. We must let Mr. Colville know, as, no doubt, we shall soon see some mys-

terious hints in the papers about the wonderful new singer who is to eclipse all her predecessors. Allow me to introduce you to Miss Madeline Vernon," she said, laughing, as Mr. Hammond at that moment entered the room.

"I am happy to make her acquaintance, and only trust I shall derive as much pleasure from it as I have done from that of Miss Lina Heathcoté," returned the doctor, with mock gravity. "So it is all settled I presume from that; you have not allowed much time for consideration, Louise; I hope our young friend will not repent her decision."

"That is hardly possible, Mr. Hammond. You do not know how often I have wished for this; it has been a dream of mine for years, and I know, from last night's experience, how much I shall enjoy it."

“But the awakening from a dream is not always pleasant, my dear young lady, and yours has yet to come; however I will not try to discourage you, though I do wish you had allowed a little more time to elapse before making the final arrangements. I met Colvile just now, highly delighted with the success of his visit here.”

“No length of time would have made me change my opinion,” Lina said. “I have thought far too much about it, and Mrs. Hammond has been so kind as to arrange everything for me.”

“And she means to keep you in very good order too, I can tell you,” remarked that lady herself. “You shall go nowhere without me; in fact, I do not intend you ever to be seen without your familiar spirit, so prepare for the infliction. You are too young, and too pretty also, for

that matter, to be allowed to go about alone."

The very words Alan had used to her, as she remembered now with a sudden pang of remorse: but she answered calmly, "I do not suppose I shall ever wish to go out alone, and I shall be only too thankful to have so kind and considerate a guardian."

"Well, I mean to be a perfect dragon, and keep off all adventurers from my *protégée*; so I give you fair warning. By-the-bye, my head has been so full of other things that I have always forgotten to ask you, John, who that handsome-looking man was that I saw you introducing to Lina last night."

"I introduced no one to Miss Heathcote," answered her husband; "she was busily engaged in talking to Captain Charteris when I came up to her."

“And he accompanied you back to the concert-room? That is the very man I mean. Who and what is he?”

“His full name and title is Captain the Honourable Lionel Charteris, eldest son of Lord Mountford; but I know nothing more about him than this. Miss Heathcote probably can tell you anything you wish to know, as he informed me he was an old friend of hers; in accordance with which statement I have invited him to come here whenever he pleases.”

“So he is a friend of yours, Lina!” remarked Mrs. Hammond, in a rather surprised tone of voice. “Where did you meet him?”

“He was staying at Waterside when we were there last autumn, and I have seen him once since then; so our acquaintance is not very extensive,” and she gave rather a constrained little laugh, for she

did not well know how to deny the truth of Captain Charteris' statement as to their being old friends without involving a discussion as to the real facts, which it was evident he wished to conceal, and so to convey to Mr. Hammond the impression that he had known Lina well for some time past. She did not like conniving, as it were, at this false impression, yet hardly knew how to contradict it; so she determined, if Captain Charteris did call, which was more than doubtful, to ask him to explain matters to Mr. Hammond as they really were.

It scarcely seemed right that he should be invited to the house as a friend of hers, when their acquaintance was in reality so very slight; but then, again, it was probable that he would never come, especially as he had himself told her that he was going out of town that day. She told

CHAPTER XI.

A VISITOR.

"No day passes without some grief."

WHEN everything was finally settled, even to the very day upon which Lina was to make her first appearance in public, when the name of Miss Madeline Vernon had already been announced as that of a young *débutante* who was to take the musical world by storm, then, but not till then, did Lina begin to realise all that she had done, and to reflect upon the promise to Alan which she had so deliberately broken. Hitherto she had been too much excited by all she had gone through, and

by the numerous arrangements to be made, to allow herself time for thought; and when she occasionally remembered Alan's strongly expressed objections to what she was about to do, she resolutely put the unpleasant recollections aside, with the excuse that now it was too late to alter her determination.

But when there came a day or two of quiet, and she had leisure for reflection, when she had written to Mrs. Murray telling her that her engagements were so numerous she should not be able to return home until quite the end of the season, then, in spite of the pleasant anticipations of her coming triumphs, her heart would fail her, and her conscience bitterly reproach her for her want of faith towards Alan. She excused herself for concealing the truth from his mother by saying that it would be so much more

easy to explain matters personally when they met again; that as Mrs. Murray, in her far-off country home, would never hear of Madeline Vernon, it was as well she should know nothing of Lina's mode of life until she could herself give an account of all that she had been doing.

But it so chanced that on the day preceding her first appearance she received another letter from Alan, so full of thoughtful affection, so kind and manly in its tone, that, as she sat alone that afternoon reading it, she felt that she would willingly renounce the pleasure to which she had so long looked forward, if by so doing she could but retain the love and respect she must surely now have forfeited. She recalled all the kindness she had received from the Murrays, the devoted, unchanging love which Alan had felt for her for years past, and the unself-

papers, and therefore could not apply to a young girl introduced under the care of such a woman as Mrs. Hammond, who would look after her as vigilantly as if she were her own daughter. Still, try as she would, Lina could not banish from her mind the uncomfortable sense of self-reproach produced by the perusal of Alan's letter, and as she sat with the open sheet in her hand there was a shade of gloom on her fair face very unlike its usual sunny brightness.

The sudden opening of the door disturbed her reverie, and she started up in much confusion and surprise as the servant announced Captain Charteris, who entered the room at the same moment.

"I fear I am disturbing you, Miss Heathcote," said her visitor, as they shook hands, and he stooped to pick up

the letter which had fallen at her feet as she rose to meet him.

“No, indeed; I was busily occupied in doing nothing just then, and I have been terribly lazy the whole afternoon.”

“Your own thoughts then must have been particularly agreeable, I should fancy. At least you have abundant material for them,” he returned, with a slight glance at the closely-written sheets of foreign paper which lay on the table beside her.

“On the contrary, my thoughts have been rather unpleasant, for I have been troubled with self-reproach, and you must admit that is not an agreeable feeling,” said Lina, making an effort to appear as cheerful as usual.

“It can hardly be possible that you can be troubled with such a feeling, unless it be through over-sensitiveness. I cannot

think Miss Heathcote can ever have cause for self-reproach."

"Ah, that shows how little you know me, Captain Charteris;" and as if this fact recalled something else to her mind, she added, "I am sorry to tell you that Mrs. Hammond is not at home to-day."

"So I was informed at the door; but much as I regret missing the opportunity of making Mrs. Hammond's acquaintance, I could not resist coming in when I found you were alone. My visit was to you," he said, pointedly; "it should have been paid long ere this if I had not been kept out of town for the last fortnight. I only returned last night."

"I hope your urgent business did no offer by the delay in your leaving town?" inquired Lima, demurely.

He looked annoyed. "You still will not believe, then, that I put myself to great

inconvenience in order to secure the chance of seeing and hearing you that evening. Why are you so sceptical ? ”

“ Perhaps because you have already given me cause to suspect the exact truth of your statements,” she answered. “ Did you not tell Mr. Hammond that we were old friends, when in fact we had only spoken to each other twice, for a very few minutes each time ? ”

“ Do you think, then, that the growth of a friendship counts by moments ? or is it not rather the result of our own natural feelings ? I did not think, Miss Heathcote, that you would have been so severe upon me, because, in order to secure to myself the pleasure of meeting you again, I chose rather to put my own interpretation upon our acquaintance than that which I see you take yourself. I will not offend again by calling it friendship until

you give me leave to do so, though I hope that time may not be very far distant."

"Well, we will not quarrel about it, only I confess to having felt rather surprised when Mr. Hammond spoke of you to his wife as an old friend of mine, when up till that evening I had not even heard your name. And now that I do know it, I see how correct was my first impression that we should not be likely to meet at all in society here, for perhaps you do not know," here she coloured slightly, "that I am going to sing in public this season."

"Then you are Miss Madeline Vernon?" he said, eagerly. "I thought so when I saw the name, but I should not have felt quite certain until to-morrow night, unless you had told me yourself."

"You are going to the concert, then?" she asked, half shyly.

"Can you doubt it, Miss Heathcote?"

he said, reproachfully. "I do not think you will find me absent any night on which your name is announced to appear, though I wish I could flatter myself that my presence or absence would be of the slightest importance to you. I am not surprised at your decision; I fully expected it after hearing you the other night, especially as you are under such excellent training with Mrs. Hammond."

"Then you think I am right to try it? I mean you do not see any harm in it?" she said.

He smiled at her simplicity as he answered, "No harm, certainly, if your friends approve of what you are doing, and there is little doubt that you have the sanction of your hostess, as you will be but following her own example. You can have no fear, for your success is absolutely certain. But I am told you

have refused to sing in the operas: is that true?"

"Oh yes, I could not bear that! I dare say I am wrong to say so, because no one enjoys seeing an opera more than I do, but I think a woman must be very bold to have sufficient confidence for acting. It all seems so real to me that I could not endure to be brought into such close contact as to see how unreal and prosaic it is in truth."

"And yet what a glorious Marguerite you would make!" He said this involuntarily, as he sat watching the varying expressions of her beautiful face, but something in his own words appeared to strike him unpleasantly, for he flushed, bit his lip, and abruptly changed the subject by asking Lina how she had been spending the last few days, as there had been a sudden influx of visitors

into London, and the gaiety of the season was commencing.

They were still talking together when Mrs. Hammond returned, and Captain Charteris so pleased that lady by the easy grace of his manner, the lively flow of his conversation, and, above all, by his deferential respect to herself, that when he took his leave she pressed him to call again, which he willingly agreed to do, not without an expressive glance at Lina, which, though lost on the elder lady, was observed by her young companion.

It must not be supposed that the latter was blind to the evident and unconcealed admiration she had excited in Captain Charteris; it would not have been human nature had she not felt flattered by the various proofs he had given

her that the interest he took in her was of no common order. He had taken pains to discover who she was, and with whom she was staying; had given up a business engagement on purpose to hear her sing; and now, immediately on his return to London, had taken this earliest opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with her; all these tokens of admiration could not fail to make some impression on the young girl, coming as they did from a man of Captain Charteris' position, aided too by his handsome face and agreeable manners.

His visit to-day, with the excitement produced by her appearance in public the following evening, tended to drive away the unpleasant thoughts which had depressed her; and when once fairly launched on her career as a singer she

CHAPTER XII.

A TROUBLED CONSCIENCE.

"Even the bright extremes of joy
Bring on conclusions of disgust."

IT is not my intention to follow Lina Heathcote through the different stages of her successful though brief career as a vocalist, during the few months of her engagement to sing for Mr. Colvile at the London concerts.

Her first appearance created an immense sensation, as was only to be expected, when so much grace and beauty were united with a voice of such exquisite quality as in the person of Madeline Vernon. The public, always

eager for novelty, were enchanted with the fair singer who had burst upon them so suddenly, and who not only refused to appear on the stage, but who, it was rumoured, intended to withdraw from the profession she was so well-fitted to adorn at the end of her first season.

From the moment she appeared on the platform for her first song her success was achieved, for the sweet modest expression of her beautiful face had won its way to all hearts, even before her clear ringing notes had been heard. Her triumph was complete, for, in addition to the great gift of her magnificent voice, she had every advantage that nature and youth combined can bestow; perfectly unassuming too in her manner, she was yet fully conscious of her powers, and while the absurd flattery with which she was as-

1

sailed fell heedlessly on her ear, she was always pleased when complimented by those who were really competent to judge of her performances. Mrs. Hammond was enraptured with the success which attended her favourite, sharing in all her pleasures, encouraging and advising her with as much zealous kindness as if Lina had been her own child, always accompanying her to and from the concert-halls, and remaining with her in the green-room when she was not actually singing.

It was soon discovered that Madeline Vernon was most jealously guarded ; and though numerous were the efforts made to obtain an introduction to the new singer by her many admirers it was not often easy to accomplish, except by the favoured few who were personally known to Mrs. Hammond herself. Always gra-

room, where, as a friend of Mrs. Hammond's, he soon became a welcome visitor. It was not long before Lina came to watch for his appearance as one of the pleasantest episodes in her new life. His admiration and attention were very grateful to her, perhaps more so than she herself would have liked to acknowledge; certainly she would not have admitted, even to herself, that before many weeks had passed the constant society of this handsome and fascinating man had become almost necessary to her happiness; apart from him she was restless and uneasy, in his presence excited, and sometimes ill at ease.

Yet she did not love him; it was not love which caused her to tremble and turn pale as he approached her, addressing her; in those low, soft tones she had learnt to know so well, which brought

the red blood surging back to her cheek; many feelings combined in Lina's mind to produce the strange sensations with which Captain Charteris' presence now filled her, but the predominant one was fear—fear of the deep, passionate nature of that love which her own beauty had roused in him.

She had liked and admired him from the first, had been pleased, as any girl would naturally be, with his undisguised admiration of herself, but when this had grown to such an extent that he could with difficulty restrain himself from expressing it openly, when his dark eyes kindled with passion, and his voice shook as he spoke to her, then did Lina begin to fear the effects of a love she could not reciprocate. Then she would shrink from meeting him, or would treat him with such marked cold-

ness that he would reproach her, and beg to be told what had caused such a change in her manner to him, and in what respect he could possibly have been so unfortunate as to offend her. At such times Lina could only blush with confusion, looking thereby even more charming than ever, whilst she admitted that she was not offended with Captain Charteris, an admission of which that gentleman was not slow to take advantage by begging Miss Heathcote, in proof of its sincerity, to resume her former friendly manner towards himself.

These little scenes after a time became of somewhat frequent occurrence, for though Captain Charteris never openly spoke to her of love, it was yet quite impossible for Lina to mistake the nature of his sentiments; and whilst his evident admiration had from the first added to

the pleasure she experienced in his society, it had now become a subject of annoyance and regret to her that this admiration should have kindled into so much warmer a feeling.

She sometimes asked herself whether it would ever be possible for her to respond to his affection, but the inward shrinking with which the question was met told her but too plainly that, much as she liked him, love had as yet found no place in her heart.

She contrasted his manner with that of Alan Murray, she thought of his whispered words of flattery and admiration, of the incense which fell all too sweetly on her willing ear, and then of the honest, manly tones of the young sailor, when, his voice trembling with emotion, he had spoken of his love,—of a love which her own heart told her was true and pure,

which would be hers till death. And then her bright eyes would grow dim as she thought of that faithful tender heart, of the pleasant image of herself which she knew to be enshrined in his memory, and of the blow she was preparing for him when he landed after his long, dangerous voyage, his thoughts so full of her whom he loved and trusted.

For long as Lina had stifled the voice of her conscience,—daintily as she had tried to gloss over the apparent want of truthfulness in her conduct towards Mrs. Murray, the one fact always remained the same: that to Alan, who trusted her, she had broken her promise. It was true there was nothing in the circumstances of her present life to which he could reasonably object; she was not alone in the world, she had not even actually embraced the profession of a public singer, but was

merely trying it for a season, and that, too, under the watchful guardianship of an old and esteemed friend of her father's.

Mrs. Murray was quite willing that her young favourite should remain in town as long as she herself wished to do so, and as for the kind old lady, it would be very easy to explain matters to her entire satisfaction when she and Lina were once more together in the old home at Tenbrook. But why did she give vent to a little half-impatient sigh as she thought of the quiet life in the pretty little house, to which after a few more weeks she must return? Had the constant excitement of the life she was now leading been so pleasant that she could not bear to contrast it with that which had been, and must be hers again in the future? Was the cup of homage and flattery so sweet

that she would fain exhaust it to the very dregs?

It is to be feared, indeed, that Lina's present frame of mind was such as greatly to unfit her for the quiet duties that lay before her, and perhaps it was the knowledge of this which made her dread the arrival of the end of the London season, when her engagement terminated,—she must leave all those pleasures in which she now so eagerly participated. Sometimes, too, she would try to picture her meeting with Alan, his bright earnest look of happiness and love as he bade her tell him all she had been doing in London; and her own downcast face as in faltering tones she endeavoured to tell him the story of her broken promise.

In imagination she saw the change in his face, the pained expression which stole over it as he said, "Oh Lina, you, whom I

trusted so fully, who never broke faith with me even as a child, why did you do it? ”

As she thought of these things, and as her vivid imagination pictured that which would soon become reality, Lina's self-reproach was so keen that she would at the moment have willingly forgone her brilliant triumphs, her most decided successes, could she but have regained good opinion which, in her own eyes as in Alan's, she instinctively felt forfeited.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONLY A DREAM.

"Evil is wrought by want of thought,
As well as want of heart."

LEFT alone one afternoon to rest in preparation for the fatigues of an unusually long concert that evening, and wearied with the painful reflections which of late had assailed her, Lina had curled herself into the luxurious arm-chair where Mrs. Hammond had left her a couple of hours previously, and had fallen asleep. She did not hear the door open, nor the entrance of a visitor, who followed so closely upon the announcement of his name that the servant had no time to

discover the sleeping condition of the sole occupant of the room.

Captain Charteris walked quickly up the long room, but stopped suddenly as he drew near to the young girl, and stood intently gazing on the fair vision before him. She had fallen asleep in the most graceful, unstudied attitude, her soft dimpled cheek rested on her hand, her lips were slightly parted as if half smiling in her dreams, and the summer air which blew through the open window ruffled the bright chestnut locks, playfully toying with the stray curl which had escaped from its imprisonment, and now fell down on the smooth white throat.

Captain Charteris gazed on the lovely face, and as he did so an evil light came into his dark eyes,—he clenched his hands as he muttered between his teeth, “What cursed fate was it which kept me from

meeting her two years ago, when I was still free to choose for myself, and then threw her in my way when too late?"

His half-spoken words must have reached the sleeper's ears, for she stirred uneasily, an expression of fear crossed her face; she opened her eyes with a startled look, and, glancing hastily around her, seemed for the moment hardly to know where she was; then, as she recognised her companion, becoming conscious of the fact that she had actually been caught sleeping at four o'clock in the afternoon in Mrs. Hammond's drawing-room, a bright rosy flush spread over her face, and she extended her hand to her visitor, saying, "What must you think of me, Captain Charteris? I am thoroughly ashamed of myself. But I hope you had only that moment entered the room?"

"You need make no apology, Miss

Heathcote ; it would be impossible for you to look more charming than you did when I came in, which was but a minute ago, —indeed, I am afraid my entrance must have disturbed your peaceful slumbers.”

“No,” she said, “I did not hear you come in ; but I had a most disagreeable dream, which I think must have wakened me. I cannot quite shake off the impression it has left even now ; yet there was nothing distinct in it, merely a horrible, undefined sensation that something was going to happen to me from which I tried to escape but could not. It is very silly of me, but I feel it still ;” and she turned pale as she spoke.

Had she been watching her companion she would probably have noticed the strange change in his face which her words produced, for he bit his lip as if in vexation, and turned away his head.

"You will not let so slight a thing as a dream make any impression upon you, I hope? It is probably very easily to be accounted for, and our first waking thoughts are generally rather confused. You surely have not any faith in dreams?" he asked somewhat anxiously.

"I hardly know what you mean by having faith in them," she answered slowly, "but I know the remembrance of them has sometimes made me very miserable; and once or twice in my life a strange dream of mine has been followed by events which have quite justified my having a slightly superstitious feeling in regard to them. Even to this day I cannot bear to dream of a storm at sea."

"And why not?"

"Because once I dreamt of a frightful storm and shipwreck. I saw the waves rolling around and closing over the

doomed ship, as distinctly as I see you at this moment. I even heard the cry of the drowning men as they clung to the masts, and the sound of that dreadful cry awoke me. I can never forget the horror of that awakening; it was many days before I could shake off the impression it left on my mind."

"But was this shocking dream followed by any disastrous consequences?" asked Captain Charteris.

"Yes it was, for not long afterwards we heard of the shipwreck and narrow escape from drowning of a very dear friend then on his homeward voyage."

"And is it not quite possible to account for this coincidence by the fact that you were interested in your friend's return home, and that your thoughts might have been a good deal occupied by him at the time?"

“Oh yes; I do not mean to say there was anything mysterious about it. I only tell you this to show you that I have had occasion once to fear an unpleasant dream, and that I do not like its recurrence.”

“This friend of yours, Miss Heathcote, is a lucky fellow to occupy so large a share of your thoughts that the idea of possible danger to him should cause you uneasiness. Is he still at sea, may I ask?”

“Yes; he ought to be nearly half way across the ocean now on his voyage home from Melbourne. But take care, Captain Charteris, you are pulling my beautiful rose to pieces; how cruelly you treat it; there, now the thorn has pricked your finger as a punishment for your destructiveness.”

“I am sorry to have spoiled your rose,” he said, with a forced laugh, “but you

must let me compensate to you for its loss by sending you some others to wear this evening. I shall not be there to see them, but you will promise to wear them for my sake, will you not?"

"You will not be at the concert, then?" asked she with surprise, disregarding his request.

"No: I came here to-day to bid you good-bye. I am summoned out of town, and cannot tell how long a time I may be kept away. My father has been taken suddenly ill up in Scotland, and my mother has telegraphed for me. I go to-night by the mail train. You will believe, Miss Heathcote," he added, in an eager low tone, "that nothing but absolute necessity would have taken me away from here just now."

She coloured, for she could not fail to understand his meaning.

"I am truly sorry for the cause of your journey to Scotland, but I hope you will find your father better than you expect, and that your visit may do him good."

"Thank you," he said, rather impatiently; "and have you no regret to spare for my absence, or is it all expended upon the cause?"

"I am sorry for both, of course," she answered, but without raising her eyes, lest she should meet the look she felt to be bent on her face.

"Of course," he repeated in a mocking tone. "That is simply a polite way of telling me it is a matter of complete indifference to you whether we part or not. Accept my grateful thanks for so kindly undeceiving me. We men are but vain creatures; there are times when we are fools enough to imagine our presence is acceptable and may be missed, but now I

see that I have fallen into an error from which you have been so good as to release me."

"Captain Charteris, what do you mean?" asked Lina, amazed by his bitter tone.

"Mean!" he exclaimed, passionately; "can you not see that you have hurt me by your coldness? that I cannot leave you without one kind word to help me on my way; some slight sign that you regret my absence, and will welcome my return? You do not know what it costs me to tear myself away from here. Only say that you will be pleased to see me when I come back."

His voice had sunk to the low pleading tones he sometimes used when speaking to her. He had risen, and now stood looking down upon her, watching the varying expressions which flitted across

her face, his own still darkened by the conflict of passion within.

It would seem as if when in the presence of Lina his good and evil genius would contend for the mastery over this man, now leading him on with the power of his fierce love for her, now drawing him back and bidding him leave her before he had taught her to return that affection which gained such rapid growth in his own heart. He did not ask himself whether it was already too late; whether his open, undisguised admiration might not have touched at least the fancy of this guileless young creature, whose very simplicity had proved her strongest charm to the man of the world, accustomed as he was to the shallow, artificial natures with whom his own life brought him into daily contact.

A true disciple of the school in which

he had been brought up, Captain Characteris pursued the path of pleasure in which he loved to move, heedless of the consequences of his own acts, and intent only upon extracting amusement for himself out of every passing occurrence. Too good-natured deliberately to devise mischief or harm to another, he was yet too selfish to abstain from wrong-doing when to do so would militate against his own interests, or clash with any pursuit in which he found himself for the moment engaged.

It was thus that he acted in the present instance. From the first day of his meeting with Lina he had yielded to the singular attraction her beauty had possessed for him ; had sought her presence again and again, whilst each time that he left her it was but to return with redoubled fervour to the object of his ever-increasing

admiration. He knew that his love could bring nothing but sorrow in its train, but he silenced the voice of conscience by saying that it was but for a season, one brief summer in which to indulge his passion, then Lina Heathcote would pass away from the world in which he lived, and their acquaintance would be as though it had never existed.

For he did not forget the wide difference in their stations—that he, the Honourable Lionel Charteris, would one day (soon, perhaps, as it now appeared) become a peer of the realm, whilst this girl, though beautiful and fascinating enough to grace the highest rank in life, was but the daughter of a professional musician; was that, in fact, herself for a time. It was not in the houses of his own friends and associates that they met, but in hers; she knew nothing of him or his life, save that

phase of it which he chose to show her when, leaving his accustomed ways, he sought her society.

And now, had he not been so fatally blinded, he would have acknowledged that the sudden summons he had received to quit the presence which daily enthralled him more hopelessly was not only, in common parlance, the best thing that could happen to him, but a solemn warning to pause whilst yet there was time, and to leave this fair young girl before he had taught her to love him. Instead, however, of viewing the matter in this light, Captain Charteris cursed the ill fate which took him away from London at the very time when he was deriving most pleasure from being there—when but six weeks more of the season remained, and it was but too probable that he would have to spend nearly the whole of that

time in Scotland, as his father had for some years been subjected to attacks of the same nature as that under which he now suffered, and his son knew from experience that he should not be able to make his escape until the somewhat irascible old peer was quite convalescent.

It was therefore with feelings angry and impatient, rather than affectionate and dutiful, that he prepared to take his leave of London gaieties for a season, nor were these feelings at all diminished by his farewell interview with Lina.

Her seeming indifference to his proposed absence had at first roused him to resentment, but this had given way on seeing her look of perplexed distress, and he had, with many protestations of tender affection, which though conveying no actual meaning were yet sufficient to prove that his love was real, extracted from Lina

a half-confession of attachment to himself. The poor girl was so bewildered by the strange fervour of his looks and words, by the vehemence with which he besought her to think at least kindly of him during his absence, and to give him some hope that he would be welcomed on his return, that in her confusion she said more than she either felt or intended.

She would have retracted her words when it was too late, but as it was she had to content herself with the hope that he would forget them before their next meeting, if, indeed, they were to meet again; or if he then recurred to them she must explain them away as well as she was able. It was with a mixture of regret and relief that she saw him take his departure; for, much as she should miss that constant, respectful homage to which she had now grown so accustomed, there were

times when the presence of her handsome admirer filled Lina's mind with a vague, undefined fear from which she was not sorry to escape.

She could not understand his manner of late, for though his admiration of herself was open and undisguised, he never committed himself by saying anything which she could construe into the expressed desire of making her his wife, though he often in her presence affected to despise those distinctions of rank and position which the girl yet felt to be a barrier between them.

She had heard him warmly defending the marriage of a young nobleman with a lady of irreproachable character, but whose social position was infinitely beneath his own; and as he gave his opinion that "true love was a leveller of all ranks," his eyes had sought her own with an

eloquence she could not mistake. Still he had never spoken openly, and Lina felt certain that in his life there lurked a secret of which she was not cognizant, and which was perhaps a surer barrier between them than that of the rank he affected to despise.

Had her woman's instinct but taught her the truth, what unhappiness and humiliation might have been spared her in the fast coming future: but it was not to be; she had taken the one false step in breaking her solemn promise made to Alan, and her punishment was at hand.

CHAPTER XIV.

LETTERS FROM HOME.

“A little more than kin and less than kind.”

WE must now transport our readers to the other side of the world, where in a neat, prettily furnished house in one of the pleasantest parts of Melbourne, they will find two English ladies, who have already been casually mentioned, but have not yet been formally introduced to their notice.

The elder, who is apparently about five-and-twenty, is seated at a table writing, and by the expression of her countenance, it is seen that she is much interested in

and duly delivered here a day or two since. You seem already to have benefited by the sea air, and I hope you will continue to do so; you ought to be quite strong by the time you reach Melbourne. What you say about the captain's kindness and attention to you makes me fancy that you may wish to return in the same ship, as you find yourselves so comfortable on board. In that case do not mind about being a few months longer away from home; you had much better wait for the "Goldfinder" than return in an inferior vessel, merely for the sake of getting back again a little sooner. I shall do very well, so pray set your mind at ease about me, for I have already made all my plans for the spring, and intend remaining in Scotland only till Christmas-week is over, as I do not relish the wretched climate at this season of the year, to say nothing of

the dulness of the household in general. My father keeps pretty strong, but they are afraid of the least excitement bringing on one of his attacks, so the girls have a nice time of it this winter. I do not know how they stand it, I know I could not, it would kill me in a month; but then I have not the requisite amount of filial piety or whatever it is, I suppose. I am thinking of going for a few days' hunting to the Blantynes, and shall take Mary with me; the change will enliven her, and my mother can do very well without her for a time. How is Alice? I hope the voyage agrees with her. I met your father just before I left town and he asked me to dinner, but I was engaged. Of course you know you must apply to Barnett, the Melbourne banker, in case you run short of cash, as you may do if the "Goldfinder" stays there any length of time.

Love to Alice and yourself, and believe me,

“ Affectionately yours,

“ BERTRAM.”

Was it any wonder that the young wife should sigh and look troubled as she read this short, cold epistle from the husband to whom she had given her heart's affection, from whom she had parted with such bitter grief a few months before, and then only at the instigation of her own family, who, persuaded that the long voyage was the only means of averting the threatened evil of consumption, had felt it their duty to urge its being undertaken?

It was long, however, before she could be persuaded to part from her husband, who assured her it was perfectly impossible he could be absent from England for so many months; and it was only the

growing conviction that her pale cheeks and troublesome cough were annoying him, which at length induced her to consent to the separation. Her grief on parting with him was excessive, but whilst her sister Alice was speechless with indignation at the callous indifference evinced by her brother-in-law, poor Gertrude herself felt grateful to him for the effort she believed him to be making to conceal his feelings from her, lest the sight of his emotion should add to her own.

Two years of married life had not yet sufficed to awaken her from the pleasant dream into which her love for the handsome young soldier had beguiled her. Of an unusually gentle, yielding disposition, trustful almost to a fault, leaning upon others for that strength which she lacked in herself, Gertrude Stevenson's was one of those

characters that are but too easily moulded by those with whom they come in contact, and but little fitted to fight their own battles in the world.

At home she had been always guided by Alice, who, though three years younger, had much more influence in the family, and a far more determined character than her elder sister, and whose quiet decided manner insensibly gave that weight to her opinion which it almost invariably deserved, but which from her youthfulness it might not always have borne.

Alice had been much opposed to her sister's marriage—not merely disapproving of her choice, but failing to detect in him those signs of devotion to the gentle Gertrude which she wished to see evinced towards one who had given her heart's first love. She had always doubted the

sincerity of his affection; but finding her parents so fully approving the marriage, and her sister's heart so entirely interested that it would only give pain to hint her own misgivings, Alice kept them to herself, striving to enter into Gertrude's happiness with her usual unselfishness, if she could not quite sympathize with its cause.

She felt certain that her gentle, loving sister had been attracted by the handsome face and fascinating manners of her suitor, and that her affection was not founded on the more solid basis of esteem for his character or talents—of which, in fact, she knew but little when first she consented to become his wife.

Their acquaintance, indeed, had been but slight, originating in a chance meeting at a country house, where the Stevensons were paying a visit to some friends ;

but from the first moment of their introduction the young officer professed to have been struck by Gertrude's charms, paying her such marked attention that no one was surprised when at the end of a fortnight their engagement was announced. Alice wished it had been in her power to congratulate her sister with greater confidence than she felt as to the certainty of her future happiness; but she could not forget the purport of a few words she had overheard the previous day, which it was impossible for her to misunderstand, and which were to the effect that it was well known Miss Stevenson's fortune was the sole attraction to the gentleman, who was heir to an old but impoverished peerage, and who found marrying an heiress the easiest method of enriching his estates.

This speech had made a great impres-

sion on Alice, tending to confirm her already half-aroused suspicions, as she could not fail to see that if she once admitted their truth many things would be accounted for which she had hitherto been unable to understand. Of the various young ladies assembled at their host's hospitable mansion, it had always seemed to Alice that her sister was the one least likely to attract the attention of the gentleman who now professed for her such a strong attachment, and who was always spoken of as being a great admirer of female beauty.

Now, Gertrude Stevenson was not beautiful; there were but few who even considered her pretty, though all agreed in admiring the pleasant expression of her deep blue eyes, and the clear but delicate transparency of her complexion; her hair, too, was of a pretty shade of brown,

whilst her figure was slight and graceful. She was a girl who amongst others would never attract any special notice; and her shy, somewhat timid manner in society kept her almost always in the background, whence her more lively sister tried often in vain to draw her forward.

It was, therefore, with no small amount of surprise that Alice witnessed the constant sedulous attention paid to her quiet sister by a man whose society she knew was eagerly sought by others whom she would have fancied much more likely to attract him; and searching about for a solution to the enigma, she stumbled upon the one which she now found to be already held by those who were freely discussing the subject.

The Stevensons were wealthy people, while it was well known that Gertrude's lover was poor: what if he were marrying

her for her money? It was a horrible suspicion, and Alice coloured with shame the first time the thought came into her mind; nevertheless it took root there, and gained firmer possession the more she saw of her future brother-in-law.

She felt unhappy at first on Gertrude's account; but when on watching her closely she could detect no signs of any but the most complete satisfaction and contentment; when she saw how deep and trusting was her sister's attachment, she could not but hope her sweet unselfish disposition—above all, her sincere affection—might speedily win the heart of him who, she had too much reason to fear, was actuated at present by the meanest of motives.

Never was the old saying as to the blindness of love more fully exemplified than in the case of Gertrude Stevenson;

nor, as we said before, did two years of married life suffice to undeceive her as to her husband's sentiments towards herself, though long before that time it had become apparent to all her own family that her almost idolizing affection remained unreturned.

Unkindness she never received ; but her loving words and looks were met with that careless indifference which so pained her sister to witness that she would often hastily rise and leave the room, in order to avoid saying something she might afterwards repent ; as with her impetuous nature it was always rather difficult to refrain from expressing her thoughts, even at inopportune times. Her resentment against her sister's husband was great ; and though she saw that as yet Gertrude was happy and unconscious, she trembled for the mo-

ment when the young wife should realize the fact of the very small hold she possessed over the affection of him she loved.

When about eighteen months after her marriage her health began to fail, and she was threatened with that dire foe, consumption, she was strongly recommended to try the effects of a long sea voyage, which has so often proved beneficial in such cases; and to this course she at first readily consented, taking it for granted that her husband would accompany her; but when she learnt from him that it would be quite impossible for him to leave England for so many months, she rebelled long and earnestly against the verdict of her physicians.

It was urged that her sister Alice would willingly accompany her; that every comfort should be procured for

her during the voyage; that she would have the pleasure to look forward to of returning in renewed health to her husband; but all was useless to persuade her to try a remedy so much opposed to her own wishes: a few thoughtless words from him for whose sake she was ever willing to suffer effected that for which the earnest entreaties of mother and sister had been of no avail.

As the first touch of autumn was felt in the air Gertrude's cough returned with unusual severity, each day she grew thinner and paler, until her friends became seriously alarmed about her, and her selfish husband, too, manifested some anxiety on her account.

"How you do cough, Gertrude!" he said irritably one evening, when he had found her lying exhausted on the

sofa; "it is enough to drive a man into a nervous fever to hear you, and you look like a ghost. You must surely think those pale cheeks vastly becoming, or you would not so persistently refuse the chance of getting a little colour back into them, which for my part I think would suit you a good deal better."

So saying, and drawing a cigar from his case, he turned on his heel to leave the room, without another word, though he well knew that his wife had been sitting up for him at the expense of an aching heart, and a fresh attack of that troublesome cough of which he had spoken so heartlessly. Had he turned back for an instant he would have wondered what sudden change had come to the pale cheeks which had just attracted his attention, but into which the

blood now rushed in a bright crimson flood, as the cold words sank deeply into the young wife's heart.

From that instant her resolution was taken, and after a sleepless night she wrote next morning to inform her sister that she had quite come to the conclusion that it was right she should undertake the proposed voyage, as her health did not improve with the approach of winter, of which in their Scottish home many signs already heralded the speedy appearance.

"But let us start as soon as possible," she wrote, "that I may have less time to think about it, or my courage might fail me when I remember that I am to leave Bertram for so long. He is anxious about me, and does not like to see me looking so pale. Of course it must be annoying to a strong man, as he is, to have a troublesome, delicate wife ; and I see now that it

is my duty, looking at it in this light, to try every means in my power to get strong again for his sake. But it is cruelly hard to part from him ! I asked him again this morning if he could not arrange to accompany me, but he says he could not possibly manage it, though I am sure he would do so if it were in his power. You know his father is in such delicate health that if anything were to happen to him whilst Bertram were away he would never forgive himself ; so I must try and content myself with the prospect of getting quite strong again. We start for London to-morrow, so you will see me nearly as soon as you receive this letter."

Alice read these words with mingled feelings of compassion for her affectionate little sister and indignation against her brother-in-law for his persistent refusal to accompany his delicate wife on her health-

seeking mission; and she indulged in a few not very elegant expressions as to his sophistry with regard to his father, who, she averred, was no worse now than he had been for years past. Never forgive himself if the old man were to die during his son's absence, indeed! And what would his feelings be if his wife were—but this was a line of thought Alice found too painful to pursue, so she turned her attention instead to the necessary preparations for the coming voyage.

When Gertrude arrived in London she expressed herself so anxious to start without any needless delay, that her father, who undertook the arrangements, immediately set about making inquiries as to a ship which would be likely to suit his daughters: and it so chanced that on the first day he accidentally fell in with a young sailor with whom he had recently

had some business transactions, and whose well-known character and pleasant manners had much pleased Mr. Stevenson.

He found from Captain Murray that his ship, the "Goldfinder," was to sail in a week or ten days for Melbourne ; that she was, in the opinion of her commander, a splendid vessel, well fitted up, and in every way adapted for the comfort and convenience of lady passengers, three or four of whom had engaged berths on board. Apparently here was the very thing for which Mr. Stevenson was looking, but unfortunately he did not think it would be possible for his daughters to be ready in ten days ; but if it were so—and he remembered Gertrude's impatience to start—this was a chance not lightly to be lost. He found that Captain Murray was only passing through town, proceeding that same evening to Southampton, and

he therefore arranged that if the two girls thought it would be practicable for them to start so soon he would meet the young sailor at the train, and accompany him to take a survey of the good ship "Goldfinder." With this resolve he hurried home to impart the news to his daughters; and far from finding them raise those numerous objections which he rather anticipated, they both agreed that their arrangements could be completed with the greatest ease by the time named, and that they should infinitely prefer sailing under the care of a captain favourably known to their father than being entrusted to an entire stranger.

To Gertrude the relief was great, when she found that her time was so short that it must necessarily be fully occupied with her own preparations and farewell visits, and that she should not have leisure for

CHAPTER XV.

TWO SISTERS.

“Birth is much, but breeding is more.”

AT first Gertrude was very weak and depressed; but gradually both health and spirits revived under the constant care of her bright, cheerful companion, the novelty of the life she led, and the extreme kindness she received from their captain, who spared no trouble to make the voyage a pleasant one to the two ladies committed to his charge.

Before they reached Melbourne so great was the change wrought in the pale, delicate-looking woman who had left London

nearly four months previously, that any one seeing the two sisters together would have fancied the younger to have been the invalid, and not the one whose bright eyes and glowing cheeks looked the picture of health. Alice's more active nature had rather suffered from the long confinement on board ship; she had also felt the tropical heat a good deal, and was not looking so well as usual when she landed; but after a few walks, and the variety of being again on land, she soon recovered.

The sisters had been a few weeks on shore when we first saw them as described at the opening of the foregoing chapter, and had that morning agreed that it would be best for them to remain in Melbourne until Captain Murray's ship returned, as they had been so thoroughly comfortable on board that they should not like to run

the risk of being less so by returning to England in any other vessel.

Alice was watching her sister rather sadly as she wrote, for she had noted the pained expression of her face as she read and re-read her husband's short letter, guessing too surely that the young wife was looking in vain for those written words of affection for which she so longed; and though Alice had not seen the epistle, she had little doubt of its contents from her knowledge of the writer. At length Gertrude looked up with a smile.

"You seem very lazy to-day, Alice. I do not believe you have done a single thing this morning, and I thought you had half a dozen letters to write for this mail."

"So I have; but you know mine do not take very long to write. A couple of hours

this evening will quite suffice for all I have to say, and really the air from this window is so delicious that I can neither tear myself away from it nor find any other occupation than imbibing as much of it as I can. This climate does certainly make me feel unusually idle."

"Then do you not think we had better leave it as soon as possible? There is still time to change our minds before the mail goes."

"No, Gertrude; we have decided to remain here until the 'Goldfinder' returns; let us keep to our determination. This place evidently suits you; it is getting cooler every day, so that we shall be able to enjoy the fresh air more than we have hitherto done; and I cannot see the necessity for hurrying back immediately, to commence another long voyage again so soon. It is but three weeks to-day since

we landed, and I am sure you cannot be tired of this place already. Besides, you tell me Bertram wishes you to remain here;" and she gazed half-curiously at her sister.

"He says we had better wait for Captain Murray if we think it would be pleasanter to make the return voyage with him; and he does not wish me to let any considerations about being so long away from home stand in the way of our decision. But, of course, Bertram only says that because he does not want me to be influenced by thinking how much he misses me. Still, I am not sure that I am right in leaving him for such a length of time. Only consider, Alice; if we wait for the 'Goldfinder' it will be July before we get back to England: nine whole months to be away from my husband."

"Do not sigh over it, dear; but remem-

ber that if you were to pack up your things and start off at once you would not see him before May ; so how much better it will be to postpone the pleasure for two more months, and then let him see you thoroughly restored to health, showing that our voyage to the Antipodes has really had the desired effect."

"But I am quite well already," expostulated Gertrude.

"Not quite," returned her sister. "Have you forgotten that tiresome cough which kept you awake till two this morning?—and as the sound of it through the wall had the same unpleasant effect upon me, it is certainly to my interest as well as yours to keep you here until you get strong enough to be above a commonplace cough, and allow your neighbours to sleep in peace."

"It is only an ordinary cold, from

which the strongest person would not be exempt; and you had one yourself last week, Alice."

"Very likely, my dear little sister; but then I have all my life been in the habit of trading upon my excellent health by doing the most imprudent things imaginable, therefore I have a right to take cold; you, on the contrary, are most carefully watched and guarded by me; and the return of your old cough shows me that you are not yet quite as strong as we fancied. So be reasonable, Gertrude, and agree with me in thinking that we cannot do better than stay quietly where we are for another six weeks or so, till Captain Murray is ready to take us home again; and tell Bertram not to be too disconsolate, as there is no danger of your forgetting him during your absence."

There was a slight tone of sarcasm in her voice as she said this, which she regretted instantly; but looking at her sister she saw that it had passed unnoticed, as Gertrude replied,—

“You always decide for the best, Alice, so I suppose it had better be as you wish; but, really, if he were only in our own station of life, I might begin to be a little suspicious of your strong desire to wait here until our good-looking young captain sails again! What a dreadful thing it would be if my sister were to be seized with a romantic *penchant* for the master of a British merchant ship!” and Gertrude looked quite horrified at the direful picture conjured up entirely by her own imagination.

“You need have no fears for me on that score,” Alice said, laughing; “though if I liked him and he liked me sufficiently

to wish to marry me, the fact of his being what he is would certainly prove no obstacle to me."

"Alice, what can you mean? You would marry a common sailor?"

"If he were a gentleman, as Captain Murray is, certainly I would. Are not our two cousins common sailors, as you call them?"

"They are in the navy, which makes all the difference in the world," answered the elder.

"Then because a man happens to have entered the merchant service, and does not wear the Queen's uniform, you conclude that he must therefore take a lower position in society, and not be considered one of ourselves, though he may have the manners, the appearance, and the cultivation of a gentleman, as Captain Murray has?"

"But you know," interrupted her sister, "that it is a fact he could not take the same rank in society as a naval officer. However, I did not think you took so much interest in his position as to speak so warmly about it."

"I do not particularly care about his individual position; but it is the wretched cant one hears on all sides as to society and its distinctions that I dislike so much, and that always makes me feel quite savage. If I had my way, society should open its ranks to those who were men of principle and innately gentlemen, no matter what their profession; and I would make some of the worthless 'upper ten' give way for better men than themselves, too," she added, a little bitterly.

"Bertram always says you are a dreadful little democrat, and I think he must be right," said Gertrude, not know-

ing whether to be shocked or amused at her sister's heterodox sentiments.

"Perhaps I am, dear ; but as you have married a member of a noble family, of course I cannot expect you to share my strange opinions, and we will not quarrel about a matter that is not likely to affect either of us at present ; but make haste over your letter, as we must have a walk this glorious day."

"Only promise me first that you will not fall in love with Captain Murray."

Alice laughed merrily as she saw the beseeching expression on the face of her sister, and assured her that so far from there being the remotest fear of such a catastrophe, she had good reason for believing the young sailor's affection to be engaged ; though she could not refrain from adding, mischievously, that as for herself she was not *half* good enough for

such a piece of perfection as she considered him to be.

In truth, both the sisters had strong reasons for liking and thinking well of Alan Murray, and it would have been base ingratitude on their part had not his kindness and delicate consideration produced a warm feeling of friendliness towards one who had spared no pains to make their sojourn on board his ship as pleasant and agreeable as it was possible to be.

Always polite and even courteous in his manner to his passengers, he enjoyed the reputation of being an universal favourite; but he had naturally taken a special interest in the two ladies who had been committed to his care by their father, and to whom he stood as it were in the light of protector.

He felt interested, too, by their peculiar

position, and watched with pleasure the returning glow of health to the cheeks of the young wife, whose parting from her husband he had commented upon in one of his letters to Lina, as well as on that gentleman's real or assumed indifference, which had aroused the warm-hearted sailor's indignation. He noticed the deep attachment subsisting between the two sisters, and the certain though imperceptible manner in which the elder was influenced by the stronger, more practical character of the younger, who yet with infinite tact never allowed it to appear as if she were taking the lead—a piece of truly feminine ability which caused Alan's frequent admiration.

The two young ladies had some friends settled in Melbourne, to whom they were to have applied immediately on their arrival, but they preferred availing them-

selves of Captain Murray's request that they would quietly remain on board, retaining possession of their state-room, until such time as he was himself able to accompany them on shore in search of the accommodation they would require during their stay in the colony.

The house they now occupied was chosen for them by him, and rarely did more than a few days elapse without their receiving a visit from him; for, be it understood, that in spite of the exclusive ideas she had expressed in talking to her sister, Gertrude would have been the last to treat the young merchant-captain upon any different footing to that of other visitors whom she was in the habit of receiving at her own house in England, so that Alan was always sure of a warm welcome when he called on the two sisters. Had not his heart been preoccupied there

might perhaps have been some danger for him in this friendly intercourse with the pretty, lively Alice Stevenson; but as it was he knew there was nothing to fear, and this knowledge added an additional charm to the society he so much enjoyed.

Raised alike by education and taste above most of those who considered themselves his equals, and with whom he was accustomed to associate, it was an infinite relief to Alan, after his day's work was over, to spend an hour or two in the pleasant refined companionship of the two ladies—reading aloud to them, or listening to Miss Stevenson's singing, which pleased him all the more in that some tones of her sweet but not powerful voice reminded him of Lina.

Alice had told her sister that she had good reasons for believing Captain Murray's affections to be engaged; but had

she chosen to do so, she might have told her of the certainty of that which she merely mentioned as a suspicion, in order to divert Gertrude's suddenly awakened fears on her own account.

For, without knowing what impulse had led him to speak of that which he held so sacred, Alan had told the girl of his home-life in Tenbrook—of the bright presence which made that home so dear to him; and of the hope which filled his heart with gladness—that Lina Heathcote would soon become his wife; for though, as we know, he had steadfastly abstained from binding her by any promise, the letters he had received from her (written immediately after his departure) had been so affectionate in their tone, that he fully persuaded himself he really held that place in her young heart of which he had formerly been doubtful.

In Alice Stevenson he found not only a warm and ready sympathizer in all he had to tell, but also a girl's romantic interest in a "real love story"; and nothing pleased her better than to hear Lina's praises from the lips of the man who so truly loved her. She had been favoured with a sight of a certain photograph which Alan kept in some mysterious depths of his pocket, and which was admired by the young lady to his heart's content. She assured him saucily that it was well for her peace of mind she had not seen it whilst they were on the voyage, as she should have felt convinced Captain Murray studied it a great deal more than he did the chart of their course; and she should have felt very much alarmed for their safety had she known that he always carried about with him the portrait of that beautiful face.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FANCIED RESEMBLANCE.

"As slow our ship her foamy track against the wind was
cleaving,
Her trembling pennant still looked back to that dear isle
'twas leaving."

CAPTAIN MURRAY called to see the two ladies on the evening of the day following that on which Gertrude had despatched her letter to her husband, and he learnt with pleasure the decision they had made to remain in Melbourne until his ship was ready to start on her return voyage.

"I do not think you will repent it," he said; "for though I tried hard not

to influence you in any way, I may honestly assure you now that I do not believe you could have found a safer or faster sailing vessel than mine. You know we beat all those that started the same week—some of them are not even in yet, though I know great things were expected from one or two.”

“I think that our confidence in the captain is as great as that in his ship,” Gertrude said; “certainly it has influenced our decision: has it not, Alice?”

“Oh yes; indeed, if the ‘Goldfinder’ were commanded by any one else I should not feel half the confidence in her powers that I do now.”

“You are very kind, I am sure,” answered Alan, laughing; “but as I have a sailor’s true pride in my ship, I must beg to differ from your opinion,—for I believe that with an efficient com-

mander, be he who he may, she will always maintain her position of first in the line."

"Then you would not like to exchange into any other service if you are so well satisfied with her?" asked Gertrude.

"I am thinking of resigning my command when I return to England this time; but it will not be to enter any other service. I intend giving up my roaming life, if I can get anything to do on shore."

"Give up being a sailor!" she exclaimed in surprise. "I thought you told us there was no life to compare to it, and that if you were a boy again you would choose precisely the same course."

"So I should; but a man must settle down quietly some time in his life, and I think that time has come for me now.

I have had fourteen years' experience of the sea, and now I should like a little novelty in the shape of life on shore, to see whether I can make my own house as snug and comfortable as the cabin to which I have been so long accustomed."

"Then you must have a wife to help to make it so," remarked Alice, slyly.

"True, Miss Stevenson, I have thought of that," he answered, in the same tone; "but is it not rather hard to suppose that I must give up my liberty, as well as resigning the freedom of my present life? Can I not dispense with a wife on shore as I have done hitherto?"

"You would very soon be returning to your old life if you had no ties to keep you at home,—stealing away some stormy night in your sailor's dress, impelled by an irresistible desire to man

the life-boat, and rush to the aid of your perishing fellow-creatures."

She looked steadily at him as she spoke, and Alan knew that she alluded to a deed of bravery in which he had risked his life some years previously, but of which he had not supposed her cognizant, and of which he certainly had never spoken himself; the story had been told to the two sisters by one of the sailors on board the "Goldfinder," in the rough, but graphic language of one who well knew the perils of which he spoke.

"Then you recommend me to take a wife as the surest means of keeping me on shore?"

"Indeed I do, and let her keep a tight hold over your affection too, or she will be in danger of finding a rival in some splendid schooner or magnifi-

cent clipper! She must keep all the shipping intelligence from you, and never allow you to go to a seaport town unless she is with you."

"What nonsense you talk, Alice!" said her sister, and turning to Alan she asked him if he would not be allowed to take his wife with him on his voyages, provided he continued his present life.

"The custom is allowed in some services," he replied, "but it is one of which I thoroughly disapprove, and I would neither give it the sanction of my own example, nor would I ever countenance it if I became a shipowner myself. I believe it would be simply impossible, however willing he might be, for a man so to forget the presence of his wife as not to think first of her safety in any case where danger might arise; it is not in human nature to do

otherwise than think of those dearest to one, even to the possible neglect of duty, and therefore I do not consider that we should be placed in such a position of temptation. Of course I know there are men whose stern rigid sense of duty overpowers every other consideration, but in them the tenderer feelings would probably not be so great as to have much weight with them. Such men might safely be trusted, but as we are not all cast in the same mould, I think the temptation ought never to be risked."

"You would not trust yourself, then, under those circumstances?" asked Alice.

"No, I would not, indeed!" he said emphatically, as the recollection of Lina's beautiful face rose to his mind. "But I must not stay here to discuss what I should do or not do under cir-

cumstances which are never likely to arise, as I promised to call and see some other friends this evening, so I will say good-bye for the present."

"We have not had any reading for a long time," said Alice, half reproachfully.

"It has not been my fault, I assure you, Miss Stevenson. I have been as busy as I could be from morning till night; but with your sister's permission, I will come again in a day or two, when I hope to be more at leisure."

"Yes, do," said Gertrude; "we are always pleased to see you."

The next morning, as the sisters were preparing to visit some friends, Alice, who was ready first, stood by the open window, carelessly watching the passers-by, and waiting till Gertrude should have finished the last page of a book

she wanted to return; suddenly a half-uttered exclamation of surprise—almost, indeed, of terror—escaped from her lips as she sank into a low chair beside her, her face pale, her eyes dilated, as if she yet saw something which the evidence of her own senses taught her to disbelieve.

Gertrude looked up quickly. “What is it, Alice? You look as if you had seen a spectre. Are you ill, dear?” and she came close up to her sister, laying her hand on her shoulder.

Alice gave a great sigh, as if by so doing she could shake off the impression she had received, and put her hand to her head, whilst the colour slowly returned to her face; then she tried to smile, but her lips trembled as she answered Gertrude’s anxious inquiries by assuring her that nothing had happened,

only she did not feel quite well, and if her sister would not mind going to the Kendalls alone, she thought she would prefer staying at home that morning.

To this Gertrude readily acquiesced, though she would not leave Alice until she had seen her comfortably installed on the sofa—an operation to which the girl was obliged, though unwillingly, to submit; for having pleaded indisposition as a reason for not accompanying her sister, she had no resource but to adopt the apparently best means of recovery, promising to remain quiet until Gertrude's return, which she begged might not be hastened on her account.

“If they ask you to stay to luncheon with them, mind you do so!” were her last words as the door closed, for in truth she felt that the greatest relief to her now would be her sister's absence

for a few hours, during which she might regain her wonted composure, ruffled as it had been by the incident of the morning.

And yet it could only have been a fancied resemblance which had struck her—some likeness in the turn of the head, or in the tall muscular figure, or perhaps something in the quick determined walk—at any rate it could not have been he, that was quite certain, so she might dismiss the idea at once from her mind.

And yet it was very strange that she could have been mistaken in one whose every feature was so indelibly stamped in her memory—whose recollection she had never been entirely able to banish, strive as she would; she could not have believed it possible that she could ever have been deceived by the strongest

resemblance into fancying she saw him, but her reason told her it must be so, for he could not be here in Australia, of all unlikely places in the world. It would be like a scene in a novel if she were to meet him again here, and nothing of so romantic a nature ever occurred to Alice; she almost smiled at the wild improbability of such a rencontre, still she wished that it had not so happened that she had been standing at the window at that particular moment. If her sister had^d been ready they would have been out in the street, would have met him face to face, and the likeness which had struck her so forcibly would have disappeared, as such things often do when the individuals are seen in close proximity. It would certainly have been more satisfactory; but in future Alice must teach herself the folly of imagining

that because she chanced to see a tall, fine-looking Scotchman, with a reddish-brown beard of an unmistakably northern tint, he must necessarily be Malcolm Dalglish.

She repeated the name softly to herself, and a light came into her eyes; then she sighed bitterly, whilst her thoughts wandered back to a few happy weeks spent long ago, of which the saddened memory alone remained, to depict but too faithfully every incident that had then occurred; she was, indeed, young to feel that her life's romance was over, and yet so it was, for though she did not doubt that a day might come when she should be able to give her affection and respect, if she met with one worthy to receive them, yet Alice knew that never again could she love with the depth and earnestness of the old days, when she

had given her whole heart into the keeping of the man whose name she now so fondly dwells on, then chides herself for her weakness.

Gertrude little knew how near the truth she had been in the question she had half-jestingly addressed to her sister on seeing her sudden start as she stood by the window; for, in fact, it was to Alice as if she had seen a spectre, the phantom which for two years she had striven to put down, but which haunted her even now, despite her efforts to overcome it. For is there aught in this world so easily summoned, but, alas! so difficult to banish, as that saddest of all sad things, the ghost of departed joy?

It was not often that Alice indulged in melancholy reveries or futile regrets; she was of too highly principled a nature, as well as too active in temperament, to

allow her thoughts to dwell upon what was inevitable, without making at least a vigorous effort to try and believe that all was for the best, even when most difficult for herself to realise that it was so. Her usual remedy for lowness of spirits was active employment for either mind or body, for she argued that idleness was the ever-open door through which the enemy of peace, whether discontent or *ennui*, could at all times find an entrance, whilst whatever gave a healthy tone to the body must exercise a cheerful influence over the mind.

Acting on this belief she would often, when assailed with regretful thoughts to which she did not think it right to give encouragement, start off, accompanied only by her favourite dogs, for a long brisk walk in the country, and this self-ordered prescription invariably had the

CHAPTER XVII.

GERTRUDE BRINGS NEWS.

"The past and present here unite."

"O H, Alice, I'm so glad to see you are all right again, dear. I was feeling quite uneasy about you, but the Kendalls would not let me come away sooner. Do you feel quite well now, and is your headache better?"

"Yes, to both your questions," Alice answered, smiling. "I have been lying down for some time, and feel perfectly well again now. But you, Gertrude, have you had a pleasant morning?"

"Yes, very pleasant; and see what lovely flowers they have sent to you! They will make our room look quite

brilliant; you must arrange them yourself—you have so much more taste than I have. But, Alice, the strangest thing has happened: who do you think I met as I was going to the Kendalls? I shall make you guess, for I am sure you will never find out!”

“Then what is the use of my trying?” said the other, with a little forced laugh, and without raising her eyes.

“Well, I do not suppose there is much use, for certainly it was the last person you would ever think of,” said Gertrude, moving away to put her hat down on a chair. “I was just turning the corner of a street, when I almost ran against a gentleman, who raised his hat to apologise to me, and as he did so we mutually recognised each other, and stopped, but at first I could not think of his name. Directly he smiled I re-

membered who he was—that Mr. Dalglish, who was papa's tenant at the Moor Farm one summer, and who left the place so suddenly before his time was out."

She stopped, as if awaiting the exclamation of surprise she expected from her sister; but Alice, bending over her flowers, did not speak.

"Surely you recollect him!" continued Gertrude; "he used to come rather often to the house just before I was married, and you were at home nearly all the time."

"I remember him," was all Alice could say, but had Gertrude been of an observant nature, the tone in which those few words were uttered could not have escaped her notice; probably it did strike her, but if so she misinterpreted its meaning.

“Perhaps you did not like him ; he was rather peculiar, but I always found him very pleasant, though of course he was not exactly in our set at home. Indeed, I thought it was very kind of papa to take so much notice of him, but then I dare say he felt sorry for him.”

“Sorry for him ! why so ?” and there was an unwonted touch of sharpness in Alice’s sweet voice as she asked this question.

“Because I do not fancy he was received at the houses of any other of the county gentlemen, but being a tenant of his own, papa thought he might make an exception in his favour.”

“And was there anything against his character that made it impossible for the other county gentlemen to receive him at their houses ?” inquired Alice, still without looking up, and her fingers ner-

vously entwining amongst the leaves of the bouquet she held.

"Not that I ever heard; but you know, Alice, Mr. Dalglish was only a farmer; he did not rent that place for his own pleasure, it was his business, or whatever you like to call it."

"Still, I never remember noticing that his manners or conversation were other than those of a gentleman: he did not eat with his knife, or smoke in the drawing-room, if I recollect rightly," said the girl, in a mocking tone.

"Of course not," returned the other, calmly, "or he would not have been received as a guest at Moorcroft; but I know he was said to be very poor, that he had hardly anything to live on but what he made from farming, so he could not——"

"And do you know *why* he was so

poor? ” interrupted her sister, with flushed cheeks and indignant sparkling eyes. “Do you know that he was heir to a considerable fortune, nearly the whole of which he relinquished on coming of age, in order that the debts of honour which his worthless elder brother had contracted before his death might be paid,—debts which they could not claim from him, but which he insisted upon paying, rather than let a shadow of dishonour rest on the old name ; and so he left himself with just sufficient to live upon, and no more. Very quixotic, and thoroughly out of date in these sensible days his conduct was, no doubt,” she added bitterly, “though I dare say even now you might find some people who would admire it.”

Gertrude looked at her sister for an instant, in astonishment at her excited

manner, but reflected that it was only Alice's way of speaking strongly; and she could not herself help feeling a little admiration for what she had just heard.

"It was certainly very noble of him," she said. "I am glad I told him he might call and see us."

"Did he ask if he might come?"

"Yes; he said he had heard that we were in Melbourne, and should be glad if I would allow him to come and see us; at least, he did not mention your name, but I said 'we,' so of course he knows that you are here too. At first I did not know what to say, but somehow one feels glad to see old faces out here so far away from home, and I did not think there could be much harm in his calling once or twice. You will not mind it, dear?" she questioned, as she

left the room, and recalling the old habit of appealing to Alice for sanction in what she did.

“There is no reason why he should not call,” the girl replied, fearing to say more, lest she should betray the intensity of feeling which her sister’s news had aroused in her mind: all other thoughts, all her good and wise resolutions, now faded away, or were merged in the one great, almost incredible fact that she should see him once more.

What matter that the past was irrevocable—that the future must sunder them again—that this meeting must be productive of pain and trouble to her, by opening afresh the old memories she had tried so long to stifle? All this was forgotten, and the work of years was undone in a moment by the joy of knowing that she should see him, speak

to him, clasp his hand once more in trust and friendship.

Beyond this feeling of friendship, of course there would be nothing between them; there never could be more, Alice knew that,—for had not her father forbidden her ever to mention Mr. Dalglish's name in his hearing? But chance having brought them together in this distant land, there could be no reason why they should not meet on the ordinary terms of friendly intercourse.

Still, whilst she said this to herself, she felt that it was a mockery, and that under no possible circumstances could they ever meet without a renewal of the old feelings, if that could be called a renewal which had never ceased to exist. She knew how it would be with herself; and as for him, she could, with as little difficulty, bring herself to doubt the most

sacred of truths as to disbelieve in the continuance of Malcolm Dalglish's love for her, so great was her faith in him.

But she must maintain strict guard over herself; her actions, her very words must be weighed; for not merely must she keep her secret from Gertrude, who had not even a suspicion of the past, but he too must be deceived into the belief that her attachment to him had died out. It would easily be done, she thought: she would take care never to remain alone with him for a moment, and his visits, if indeed he paid more than one, would probably not be very long, so that her power of self-command would not be over-taxed.

All she could do was to summon her courage and self-restraint to her aid, and trust to his helping her out of the difficulty of their meeting by his own good feeling

and regard. Of one thing alone was she certain—that the delight she experienced at the prospect of seeing him again well-nigh eclipsed all other considerations in her mind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FAITHFUL.

And doth not a meeting like this make amends
For all the long years I've been wandering away?"

IT was not much sleep that Alice obtained that night; and the next morning a *bonâ-fide* headache caused her to look paler and more unlike herself than she had done since the first day of their arrival. She recovered however towards the afternoon, and would not hear of Gertrude's proposition to give up a drive which she had engaged to take with her friends, saying she should be much better left alone with her book, and should

perhaps fall asleep if she had no one to talk to her.

"I wish you would go for the drive instead of me, Alice," said Gertrude, as she entered the room ready equipped for her expedition; "it might do you good."

"No, dear, thank you; the only thing that really does do me good when my head aches is perfect quiet, and I can only have that at home."

"Well, I hope Mr. Dalglish will not take it into his head to call whilst I am out: what shall you do if he does?"

"You had better tell Fenton as you go out, that if any one calls I am not well enough to see them."

"Yes, I think I had; but he will hardly come so soon as to-day: it was only yesterday that I met him. Listen," she added, "there is some one at the door now, and I hear a man's footstep; perhaps it is Cap-

tain Murray, if so we will tell him he must not stay."

But Alice had heard the step, and knew well whose it was, as with a sudden movement she pushed her chair back into the shade so that her face might be partially hidden, and pressed her hand for an instant tightly to her heart, as if to control its violent beating.

Then she saw and heard nothing; the room appeared to swim before her eyes; voices sounded as though they reached her from a distance, and the sole thing of which she was conscious was the warm, eager grasp in which for an instant her hand was held, as her own lay cold and impassive in his, but she lacked even the physical energy necessary to raise her drooping head, and was glad to sink back quietly in her chair.

After the lapse of a few seconds she

regained her composure sufficiently to look up and notice what was taking place: Mr. Dalglish, she found, had seated himself at some little distance from her, and with his head turned away was talking to Gertrude, so she was able to watch him unobserved. He was but slightly altered, as she saw at the first glance; looking perhaps a little older, and there were more lines on the face than had been there when she knew him, but whether from care or the natural result of the hard life he led she could not determine; his voice, too, as it now falls on her ear, has lost none of its old richness of tone, and as she hears it Alice's thoughts again stray far away from the present time, and she is at home in England, walking in a shady wood on her father's estate, listening to the same musical voice, as it pleads in passionate accents the old, old story.

With a great effort she brings her mind back to the scene before her, and is seized with a feeling of shame lest he should have seen her embarrassment, and considerately abstained from looking at her, in order to allow her time to recover. That will never do—she must say something, if only to show him that she is perfectly at her ease in his presence, but what commonplace to utter she cannot think of at the moment.

“I am so very sorry,” she hears Gertrude say, “that I am obliged to go out this afternoon, but I am every minute expecting some friends to call for me. It is unfortunate, too, that my sister has such a bad headache that I am afraid she will not be able to entertain you; but I hope you will come and see us again soon. Do you intend staying in Melbourne for any length of time? as I think

you told me yesterday you are not living here."

"No ; my home at present is a three days' journey up the country from here, but I came down on some business, and cannot yet tell how long I may remain in the town. This is the first time I have been in civilised society for more than a year, so you must excuse me if I indulge in any eccentricities, for I have been of late accustomed only to the society of my partner—a very worthy sort of man, but who has spent all the best years of his life in the bush, till his ideas now barely range beyond the limits of sheep-shearing and wool-selling."

"And is that what you have to do?" asked Gertrude, looking slightly shocked.

"Yes," he answered, with an amused smile, as he caught the expression on her face, "that, and many other things of which

an English lady little dreams. What do you say to my having helped to build the house I now live in with my own hands? and a very comfortable little place it is too, I can assure you."

Gertrude involuntarily glanced at his hands, to see the effect all this hard work had produced upon them; but they still retained their shapely form, though somewhat bronzed from exposure to the sun and air.

"You must come and see us again, Mr. Dalglish," she said, as her maid announced Mrs. Kendall's carriage. "I am sure you must have some curious stories to tell us of Australian life, and it will be better than reading a novel, will it not, Alice?"

"Decidedly more true, I should say," answered her sister, thankful to be obliged to answer a question which did not involve

any thought, as all her ideas seemed to have flown, and yet constrained her to speak, which for the last few minutes she had been longing to do, but could not.

He started as he heard her voice for the first time, and glanced towards her; but she had risen, and was assisting Gertrude in the arrangement of her shawl, and her face was turned from him.

The elder sister evidently expected that Mr. Dalglish would take his departure when she did, and considered it rather a breach of good-manners on his part when, after the hints she had given him to that effect, she found that he had no such intention; so she rather pointedly enforced upon Alice the necessity of taking care of her headache, as she shook hands with their visitor and left the room.

He closed the door after her, and

repeated himself; but this time he was facing Alice, who could not escape from his scrutinizing gaze.

"Your sister intended me to take my leave when she went out," he said; "but I could not resist staying a few minutes longer, unless Miss Stevenson herself wishes me to go."

"Oh no, you need not go; only Gertrude thought I had better keep quiet to-day." This was not very gracious, but what could she say? She must not let him fancy that she was anxious for him to remain with her; and, indeed, she was not, for she had only yesterday resolved not to be alone with him at all.

"You do not look well," he said, gently. "Tell me, was it for your health this voyage was undertaken?"

"Mine! No, indeed, I am perfectly strong. It was on poor Gertrude's ac-

count: she has been so delicate for the last year, and suffered so much from her cough, that the medical men all advised her to try the effects of a sea voyage. She did not like the idea at first, and we had hard work to persuade her, but she became so much worse that after a time she gave in, and it was settled quite in a hurry at the last. She is a great deal better now,—you can see yourself how well she looks.”

“Yes, she does not appear to be much of an invalid at present; but may I inquire why her husband did not accompany her here?”

“He was too busy to leave England for so long a time.”

“Too busy! I fancied he had sold out of the army immediately after his marriage.”

“So he did; but now that his father is

incapable of attending to anything, Bertram has the estate to look after, and many other things to do, which prevented his leaving England."

"And so *you* must needs be sacrificed again?" he said, slowly.

"What do you mean, Mr. Dalglish? Can it be any sacrifice to accompany my only sister on a voyage which is to restore her to health and strength?" She looked at him almost indignantly as she spoke, but he only smiled.

"I mean that you have suffered yourself from that which has been of so much service to your sister; you are looking ill and harassed."

„Indeed you are quite mistaken; I have seldom felt better than since we landed here, though the voyage was perhaps a little too long for me. It is only yesterday and to-day that I have had this

tiresome headache,"—and a rosy flush suffused her cheeks as she reflected on the cause, which she hoped he would not divine.

"You have been in Melbourne about three weeks, I think?" was his next remark.

"Just three weeks, and we have settled to wait here until the same ship returns, as we liked her so much. Were you not very much surprised to meet Gertrude yesterday?" Alice could speak more freely now that the first constraint of their meeting was over.

"Very glad, but not in the least surprised."

"Then you knew we were here?" she asked, looking up quickly.

"Yes; I knew it exactly a week ago. In my part of the world, as you may imagine, letters and papers do not make their appearance with that regularity to which

you are accustomed in England, and we have often to trust to the travellers who pass our way for news. Owing to this fact, it was not until a week ago that I received a copy of a Melbourne paper nearly a fortnight old, in which I saw the arrival of the 'Goldfinder,' with a list of her passengers. We were very busy at the time, but that did not prevent me from starting for town within two days after I read that little paragraph; so you see I could not feel much surprised when I met your sister yesterday."

He paused, but Alice did not speak, and he continued, "I had found out where you lived, and passed the house in the morning twice, but I should not have presumed to call until I had ascertained whether I should be received or not. From your sister's manner to me I am led to believe that she knows

nothing of what passed. Is it not so ? ”

Alice gave an almost inaudible assent.

“ You are not angry with me for coming ? ” he said, his manner suddenly changing to the old tenderness. “ I could not help it ; to know that you were in the same country, that in three days’ time I could see you again, was a temptation which I should have been more than man to resist. I had done what I could—I had placed the ocean itself between us—and if chance, or Providence as I incline to think, has brought us again within the same country, am I to blame in seeking you once more ? ”

“ I did not know you were in Australia,” was Alice’s rather irrelevant answer, in a voice that trembled with the emotion she vainly strove to conceal.

“ You mean that had you done so, it

would have prevented you from coming here ? ” He waited eagerly for the answer, but it did not come.

Then he rose from his chair, and seating himself in one close to hers, he drew her small trembling hand into his, holding it clasped with the old familiar gesture; and she did not resist it,—nay, she even felt a thrill of delight, though but a few hours since she had pictured to herself the strict formality to be maintained during their interview.

“ Alice,” he said, speaking low and earnestly, “ it is useless, I think, for us to try and deceive ourselves or each other. All that happened two years ago makes it impossible that there should ever be anything but the honest truth between us two, and I find that I have unconsciously deceived myself as to my motive in coming to see you here. I fancied that I only

wanted to see you again, to look once more on that dear face ; but it was not so, —it was to satisfy my own selfish longing to know that I still held some place in your affection, to be assured that all the love you once gave me had not been utterly crushed out of your heart since we parted. I had no right to hope this,—indeed, had I your true interest solely in view, I suppose I should rejoice to hear that you had forgotten me, and that another more fortunate than myself had taken my place. But this I could not do ; you knew I should never change. You once told me that nothing could shake your faith in me, come what might ; and that has helped to cheer me through many a trouble and difficulty ; for in spite of all that combined to separate us,—of your father's determined opposition, of my comparative poverty, and of that fortune of

yours on which I was supposed to cast such covetous eyes,—I have felt through everything that if we were but faithful to each other I would win you some day, and boldly claim you for my wife, meeting you then on equal terms. For more than two years now I have fought my way with this hope ever in view as the reward of my toil; and it is a hope founded solely on my firm conviction that our love was not destined to last but a day, and then be lightly blown to the winds by the first breath of opposition, as a thing that had no root or depth. It might, however, have been presumptuous in me to entertain this belief; therefore, without acknowledging to myself that it was so, it was to know if I were justified in holding it that I came here to-day. One look into those clear eyes, in which has never lurked the shadow of an untruth, satisfied me. Alice, you

will not deny that I have still some ground for my hope? ”

She did not speak, but the hand he held closed softly over his own, as if with a mute assent to his words.

“ I knew it,” he said quietly; “ I knew that Alice Stevenson’s was not the nature easily to forget where once she had given her love. Do you know why your father refused his consent and dismissed me from his house? ” he asked after a pause.

“ Because you were poor,” and she looked up with the same half-defiant expression in her face, which it had worn when she had spoken of him to her sister.

“ And you were rich,” he added bitterly. “ But you never thought that of me, Alice? ”

“ Thought what? ” she asked wonderingly.

“ That I sought you for your fortune; ”

and he bent his stately head to look closely into the girl's face.

"Oh, Malcolm, how can you ask me?" she said in a pained voice, and the look that answered his was full of the love she no longer sought to conceal from him.

"I ought not to have asked you, dearest; but, in truth, when I think of that day—of the mercenary imputations laid upon me, and the insults to which I was subjected because I had dared to love the daughter of a gentleman who had treated me on the most friendly terms, admitting and encouraging my visits to his house—it is little wonder that I forget everything but the remembrance of my wrongs."

"But do not think of that time—try, for my sake, to forget it."

"I have tried, Alice; but I come of a race that has never brooked an insult, and it was only the remembrance that it

was your father who spoke to me that kept me from telling him, in the plainest terms, what I thought of the language he used to me. But, thank Heaven, I abstained from that, and he can never reproach me with forgetting what was due from one gentleman to another. I would have vindicated myself, but he would not listen; and yet, do you know of what he accused me? He said that I was an impostor, that I had taken the Moor Farm under false pretences, being no more than a pauper impoverished by my own shameful excesses, and seeking to retrieve my broken fortunes by marriage with his daughter."

"Why did you not tell him the truth about your brother?" sobbed Alice; "he would have understood it then."

"He would not have believed me at that moment; but I hastened to assure

him that I was not absolutely penniless, that there was some slight remnant of my fortune left, which I hoped materially to increase before long, if he would but give me time; but his excitement was so great that he would listen to nothing. I said, and kept on repeating his own opinion of my conduct. At last I asked permission to write to him and explain matters, leaving him to think over my proposal at his leisure; but he refused to receive any communication from me, and forbade me to hold any further intercourse with his household. Seeing that reasoning with him was of no use, I took my leave; but, in spite of his prohibition, after the lapse of a few days, when I thought Mr. Stevenson's indignation might in some measure have subsided, I wrote to him telling him what I had considered it right to do with regard to my property, on coming of age,

and explaining in full my real position—for I was not quite so poor as you imagined, Alice, though not rich enough to have married just at that time. I only asked permission to be allowed to continue my visits at your house, with your father's sanction to our engagement; adding that you were perfectly willing to wait until such time as he should think it prudent for our marriage to take place, and that, with industry and economy on my part, I trusted it would not be very long before that day came. That letter was returned to me unopened."

"I cannot bear to think that you should have suffered such injustice on my account—that your poverty should have been made a cause of reproach, when it arose solely from your own sense of honour and justice!" Alice exclaimed passionately. "It was cruel not to let you

“speak in your own defence, and not even to let me tell the real truth.”

“My poor Alice, I often wondered whether the edge of the storm fell upon your little head, or whether it had all been expended upon me.”

“Papa was very angry, called me undutiful and deceitful—but I was too unhappy to care much for what he said until he began to speak of you, and that I could not stand. I have forgotten what I said now; in fact, I do not think I could have known at the time, for papa said I was unwomanly; he ordered me out of the room, telling me never to mention your name again before him,” and her cheeks glowed hotly at the recollection of that time.

“Unwomanly! You, the truest little woman that ever gladdened the heart of man!” exclaimed Mr. Dalglish, drawing

the slight shrinking form towards him. "But I can guess what it was that called forth that most inappropriate term—you spoke too warmly, which is an offence your father cannot pardon in any one but himself."

"Hush! do not sneer," she pleaded. "I am sure he was very sorry for me afterwards; and when he saw that I was really unhappy, no one could have been kinder than papa. He took us up to town that Christmas entirely on my account, and did everything that was possible to amuse and interest me."

"Probably thinking that a course of sight-seeing was the best remedy for the loss of a lover, on the same principle that a child is taken to the theatre after paying a visit to the dentist," he laughed scornfully.

"I think you are forgetting that he is my father," Alice said with quiet dignity.

"You are right ; forgive me. I ought to have remembered it now as I did on the last day when I parted from him at Moorcroft—but it is harder to me to hear of your unhappiness, than it has been to bear my own. Tell me, dear, did you know why I never came back to you that day?"

"Yes : I had heard loud voices in the study, and knew papa was angry about something. Then, when I saw you walking quickly away in the direction of the farm, I guessed what had happened, though I did not think he would have kept to his determination after all. But when two whole days passed, and I saw nothing of you, your name never being mentioned, papa looking gloomy, and mamma half frightened, I began to feel that we had been separated indeed. Still I hoped he might relent in time, until I got your letter, and knew that all was over."

“I did not send it until I had my own returned, because I, too, had hope until then. At first I thought of trying to see you, but I reflected that I must not do anything which could ever cause your father to say I had acted dishonourably; and if we had met it must have been in secret. But it was hard not to see my darling once again.”

“Better as it was,” she said. “It would have been harder to part if we had been together, knowing it to be for the last time. But do you know I have sometimes wondered whether we did quite right in those days—I mean in not telling papa at once.”

“He was away from home, Alice,—how could we tell him?”

“Yes, but you know we used to meet every day during that fortnight,—not always by accident either; and I have

thought since that perhaps I was wrong to see you at all until you had spoken openly. It almost seems as if we had been doing something clandestine."

"I think we need not reproach ourselves on that score. We had not intentionally chosen that particular time for confessing our love; indeed, there had seemed little need to confess it, for each of us had long been conscious how dear we were to the other. Was it not so, Alice?"

She smiled in response, and he continued,—

"It was quite accidental at last, in fact; and though we knew that our engagement must be contingent upon Mr. Stevenson's approval, I think there could be little or no harm in our meeting during the few days that intervened before his return home. Do you remember the stile, at the

entrance to the little wood, where I left you for the last time?"

"Ah, do not speak about that!" she answered, with an expression of pain.

"Why not, dear? Those happy days will come to us again."

"I cannot believe it, Malcolm. Papa will never consent. The same objections must hold good now as then."

"Now, perhaps, they might; but I am going to test the strength of your affection for me a little more. I am already a much more prosperous man than when last I ventured to ask you to be my wife. Fortune has favoured me rapidly since I came out here, and in another year, if she does not desert me, I think I may dare to present myself before your father—at any rate, without running the risk of being called a pauper. And yet I do not know that I ought to ask you to sacrifice so much for

me,—three years out of your bright young life,”—and he held her face between his hands, looking down into the depths of her pure, loving eyes.

Into them there came a sparkle of the old archness which he well knew, as she said, blushing beneath his gaze, “You do not believe in your heart that it is the least bit of a sacrifice, only you want me to tell you so, and I shall not gratify your vanity. Besides, you don’t suppose that I have been waiting for you all these two years; you cannot tell how many flirtations I have been indulging in during that time.”

“I do not mind how many,” he answered in the same tone, “for I find your own heart is in the right place still, whatever you may have done in the way of breaking others. But you must satisfy my curiosity on one point: how does it happen that

your sister is in ignorance of the cause of my dismissal from Moorcroft,—for she evidently knows nothing about it ? ”

“ Do not you remember that she was away on her wedding trip when it all occurred ? ”

“ Yes, I recollect it was just after her marriage ; but was she not told anything when she returned home ? ”

“ They were abroad for six months ; long before they came home the storm had blown over, and papa had forgiven me ; out of consideration for me, therefore, Gertrude was never told what a naughty girl I had been. I believe she asked why you had left the farm before the expiration of the year for which you had taken it, and finding from mamma’s manner that something had gone wrong, she concluded that you had proved an unsatisfactory tenant, and not paid your

rent, I suppose. But you know Gertrude is not of an inquisitive nature; and she asked no more questions."

"Then she had never suspected anything?"

"No, that was hardly likely; for all the time you were so much at our house she was occupied with preparations for her own marriage, and Bertram was constantly at Moorcroft, so she had luckily no time for thinking about us. But what shall I say to her now? I must tell her, now that she and I are alone together out here; I cannot be guilty of concealment from her."

"Tell her, then, and she will give you her kind sisterly sympathy, I am sure."

"But what am I to say? I cannot tell her we are engaged; that would not be true."

"You must tell her that you have

promised to be my wife as soon as I shall be in a position to ask you from your father without again incurring the risk of his displeasure, but that of course no formal engagement will exist between us until his consent is obtained. And, by-the-bye, I do not believe you ever have given me that promise at all yet."

Whereupon there followed sundry pretty little speeches which it would not be at all interesting to transcribe, so we will merely say that the parting which subsequently took place, though not at all according to the strict rule which Alice had prescribed for herself, was eminently satisfactory to both parties concerned, and not a trace of the bad headache remained, in the blooming happy countenance which was raised to greet her sister on the latter's return from her long drive.

Indeed, Alice almost feared that her

secret must betray itself in the quiet, contented smile which would break forth now and again, or in the unwonted joyous ring in her voice of which she was conscious; but Gertrude was only pleased to find that rest and quiet had proved so beneficial, and hoped Mr. Dalglish had not stayed long.

Alice managed to parry the few questions put concerning his visit, by telling her sister that he would probably call again in a day or two, when she could herself ask him anything she wished to know, but she had resolved to say nothing until the following morning of what had taken place between herself and Mr. Dalglish. For this one day, at least, she would keep her newly-restored happiness, as formerly she had kept her grief and trouble, locked in her own breast. She must, in fact, have time to think it all

over before she could quite bring herself to believe that the events of the last few hours were not merely the products of her own imagination, worked upon by the fanciful resemblance she had seen yesterday.

No, it was all true, and her cheek burned as she recalled his last words with the caress that accompanied them. She had ever remained true in heart to her first love, and now she had met with the reward of her fidelity, for he too was unchanged. He had never even abandoned the hope of one day making her his wife, though the insults and injustice he had received from her father had been sufficient to make him endeavour to forget the fact of having ever sought her hand, if not to regret having placed himself in such an unpleasant position.

As she lay awake that night thinking of

all that had happened to her during the day, she resolved that whether her father's opposition to the marriage should be overcome or not, she had chosen her part in life, and she should abide by that choice. She was no child who must be tutored and controlled, but a loving, steadfast woman, whom no earthly power must again separate from the man who had won her love and esteem. She had never hitherto failed in dutiful obedience to her parents, but there was a limit beyond which this should not be carried, and Alice felt that she now owed a duty to the brave, true-hearted Malcolm, who had resolutely determined upon overcoming all obstacles in order to obtain her for his wife.

Before she slept her mind was fully made up that on her return to England she would lay the whole facts of the case before her father, entreating him to con-

sent to what alone would ensure his daughter's happiness, but telling him at the same time that should that consent be withheld she had resolved to marry without it, painful as such a course would be to her, as in so doing she should not consider that she was acting otherwise than rightly. The necessity for this proceeding she hoped would never arise, but there was no knowing how Mr. Stevenson would receive a second proposal from the man whom he had formerly treated with such indignity. He was a man of strong prejudices, and somewhat narrow intellect, and it had sometimes happened within Alice's recollection that her father, having once refused a request of which he was afterwards brought to see the justice, would nevertheless abide by his first determination for no other reason than that it *was* his first.

